



STRENGTHENING LOCAL AGRI-FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON FOOD IMPORTS

Policy Brief

Name of Indicator: Food import dependency

Field of Application: Economy & Supply Chains

This policy brief is part of the ClimEmpower policy recommendations, available from climempower.eu. It translates evidence and project findings into practical guidance for regional and local policymakers seeking to strengthen resilience to climate and other systemic disruptions. It focuses on food import dependency and the capacity of local and regional agri-food systems to maintain reliable access to food during disruptions.

The main recommendation is to strengthen local agri-food systems by linking local production, storage, processing and distribution within a climate-resilient framework. This requires rethinking public procurement, investments in sustainable agriculture and resilient infrastructure, and support for shorter supply chains to improve food availability and system stability during shocks.

Local Agri-Food Supply Chains



Key Challenges

- High dependence on food imports increases exposure to global shocks
- Local production, storage and processing remain fragmented and under-invested
- Demographic rural decline is compounded by unsustainable agriculture



Good Practices

- Develop short supply chains and strengthen local food markets
- Improve local storage, processing and distribution capacity
- Strengthen sustainable and economically viable local production.



Priority policy actions



Assess import dependency and supply vulnerabilities

Identify which food categories carry the highest import dependency and the points in the supply chain most exposed to disruption.



Map local production capacity and infrastructure gaps

Establish a clear picture of existing local production and the storage, processing and logistics infrastructure needed to scale it.



Invest across the local food value chain

Direct investments towards agricultural infrastructure, storage, processing, distribution and higher-value local food products.



Strengthen short supply chains and local markets

Strengthen connections between regional actors, using public procurement and other market incentives to create demand for local products and reduce reliance on longer, more vulnerable chains.



Integrate food systems into urban and regional planning

Ensure that agricultural land, sustainable production, food processing, storage and logistics needs are considered in urban and regional planning.

Implementation Roadmap

1

Phase 1 — Assessment and mapping

Assess food import dependency and critical supply vulnerabilities, and map existing local production capacity alongside infrastructure gaps.

2

Phase 2 — Strategy and infrastructure investment

Define a local food security strategy and direct investment toward agricultural infrastructure and storage systems that close identified gaps.

3

Phase 3 — Producer support and market development

Establish support schemes for local producers and strengthen short supply chains and local markets to increase the share of locally distributed food.

4

Phase 4 — Planning integration and monitoring

Integrate local food system objectives into urban and regional planning, and monitor local production levels and import dependency trends over time.

Funding



Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Can support local production and short supply chains.



European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Can finance agri-food infrastructure and logistics investment.



LEADER / Rural Development Programmes

Can support local food system initiatives.



Horizon Europe

Can fund research on sustainable production, resilience, and short food supply chains.



National food security and regional development funds

Can further support local agri-food system investments.



Conclusion

Strengthening local agri-food supply chains improves food security, supports local economic activity and creates opportunities for value-added production and employment.

It also helps make locally produced food products more recognisable for their environmental sustainability and value, while reducing transport-related emissions and increasing resilience to global market and climate shocks.