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“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Food systems profiles: A strategic tool for understanding food systems, diagnosing challenges, enabling dialogue, articulating actors and and informing territorial agendas

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Abstract

Understanding and transforming food systems at the territorial level requires tools that can capture complexity while remaining accessible and action-oriented. This presentation explores the potential of local food system profiles as strategic instruments for making sense of fragmented data, connecting diverse actors, and supporting inclusive governance.

Developed under a common conceptual and methodological framework, food system profiles go beyond a compilation of indicators. They are designed to identify critical points of unsustainability in a territory's food system and to prioritise multi-level interventions that address these challenges through targeted actions and investments. A defining feature of this approach is the co-construction of the profiles with key public and private stakeholders, who contribute to data identification, validation of findings, and the formulation of key messages.

Drawing from applications in Colombia, Honduras, and Vietnam, we present a step-wise, participatory process for generating evidence-based profiles that link agricultural practices, land use, food environments, nutrition outcomes, and governance gaps. These profiles facilitate systemic thinking and help build a shared understanding across sectors and scales—from local governments and producers to civil society and national policymakers.

Using a harmonised framework also enables comparative analysis across territories, fostering cross-learning and supporting decision-makers in designing more coherent, context-aware food policies. While the primary aim is to support local planning, these profiles contribute to broader global debates, such as reconciling land system changes with planetary health. By revealing how unsustainable land use, climate risks, and poor dietary diversity intersect, they offer valuable insights into how agricultural and food systems can be reoriented toward greater sustainability.

In conclusion, food system profiles offer a practical and inclusive tool to inform decisions that reduce negative impacts, such as malnutrition, food loss and waste, and environmental degradation, while enhancing food systems' social, economic, and ecological sustainability. They help territories move from isolated efforts to integrated strategies that generate shared benefits for people and the planet.

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