

Title

Ghent en garde

Short description

Ghent was the first city in Flanders to have developed a food policy, called Ghent en Garde, with 5 strategic goals that have been translated into 21 concrete operational goals. Below an overview is given of the strategic and operational goals.

Strategic goal no. 1: A shorter, more visible food chain

- 1.1 Know your producer
- 1.2 Greater access to local products
- 1.3 Space for professional food production
- 1.4 Space for individual and joint non-professional food production

Strategic goal no. 2: More sustainable food production and consumption

- 2.1 Encourage food producers and processors to use sustainable production methods
- 2.2 Encourage consumers to buy sustainable products
- 2.3 Encourage organisations and businesses to buy sustainable products and services
- 2.4 Sustainable food at events

Strategic goal no. 3: Create more social added value for food initiatives

- 3.1 Build on links with existing networks and social players
- 3.2 Access to affordable, sustainable and healthy food for everyone
- 3.3 Knowledge building on food systems
- 3.4 More social cohesion and integration
- 3.5 Social employment through food

Strategic goal no. 4: Reduce food waste

- 4.1 Set up systems and services to reduce food wastage
- 4.2 Recovery and redistribution of food surpluses
- 4.3 Education on small-scale purchasing, processing and storing

Strategic goal no. 5: Optimum reuse of food waste as raw materials

- 5.1 Try out new business models
- 5.2 Get more organic waste from residual waste
- 5.3 Recover waste streams locally and close waste cycles
- 5.4 Turn low-value waste into high-quality food

The goals are used in the quest to create a concrete sustainable food system. The current food policy in Ghent entails many innovative, local and sustainable food strategies to reach the abovementioned goals. In the booklet in attach, a detailed overview of the food policy is given. Some of the components of this food policy were already evaluated and created positive effects on health behaviours.

Topic

Consuming – food

Living – Green spaces

Characteristics (type, level)

Regional
Policy

Country/Countries of implementation

Belgium

Aims and Objectives

In 2013 the City of Ghent launched 'Ghent en Garde', a food policy that includes five strategic goals to pave the way for a sustainable food system for Ghent. These goals were decided based on various stakeholder discussions, input from the city administration and political agreement.

1. A shorter, more visible food chain
2. More sustainable food production and consumption
3. The creation of more social added value for food initiatives
4. Reduce food waste
5. Optimal re-use of food waste as raw materials

Ghent is the first Flemish city to have developed a food policy. Its goal is to reduce the negative impact each link in the food chain has on the climate and to make the food system more sustainable.

The current food policy in Ghent entails many innovative, local and sustainable food strategies to reach the abovementioned goals. In the booklet in attach, a detailed overview of the food policy is given.

Target Group

'Ghent en garde' is an extensive food policy that aims to reach all actors in our food system, namely consumers, retailers, organisations (i.e. school, workplace), producers. Ghent also pays particular attention to reaching the inhabitants from more disadvantaged areas and with a low socio-economic status.

Status

Ongoing
Implemented on a continuous basis

As this is an extensive food policy that includes many components, some of them are ongoing and some of them are already implemented on a continuous basis such as Thursday Veggie Day.

Start and Completion dates

Ghent en garde started in 2013 and is still ongoing.

Lifestyle and Behavior Change

This extensive food policy includes many initiatives/practices based on the five strategic goals.

1. A shorter, more visible food chain
2. More sustainable food production and consumption
3. The creation of more social added value for food initiatives
4. Reduce food waste
5. Optimal re-use of food waste as raw materials

'Ghent en garde' is able to create a more healthy, sustainable lifestyle among the inhabitants of Ghent by focusing on the individual itself or by initiatives that improve the current food system in Ghent. Some of the included practices in Ghent en garde were already proven to be effective (see below).

Effects on:

<p>Health and Wellbeing</p>	<p>'Ghent en garde' might create a more healthy, sustainable lifestyle among the inhabitants of Ghent which can lead to a better health for all. Some of the included practices in Ghent en garde were already proven to be effective (see overview of main activities).</p>
<p>Vulnerable populations</p>	<p>One of the strategic goals of 'Ghent en garde' focusing on reaching everyone with their initiatives, also the low SES inhabitants. (see also strategic goal 3 and the operational goals of this goal)</p> <p>Strategic goal no. 3: Create more social added value for food initiatives</p> <p>3.1 Build on links with existing networks and social players</p> <p>3.2 Access to affordable, sustainable and healthy food for everyone</p> <p>3.3 Knowledge building on food systems</p> <p>3.4 More social cohesion and integration</p> <p>3.5 Social employment through food</p>

<p>Environment</p>	<p>The goal of Ghent is to reduce the negative impact each link in the food chain has on the climate and to make the food system more sustainable.</p> <p>The current food policy in Ghent entails many innovative, local and sustainable food strategies to reach this general goal.</p>
---------------------------	---

Initiated and/or implemented by

The idea for this initiative was written into a coalition agreement in Ghent some years ago. So it was initiated by policy makers to create a climate neutral city.

Stakeholders and sectors involved

Inspired by a similar approach in Bristol and Toronto, the City of Ghent set up a ‘food council’. The Ghent en Garde food policy council consists of about 25 members from various sectors, i.e. agriculture, associations, knowledge institutions and commerce. The policy group acts as a sounding board for the city’s policy on food, issuing recommendations on new or existing projects, proposing new ideas, discussing the city’s strategic vision and acting as a major ambassador to help promote the city’s vision on sustainable food production and consumption.

Financial support

The city of Ghent provided financial support. But also the participation in European projects, for example Food smart cities, provided extra financial support.

Evidence-base

The ‘Ghent en garde’ food policy is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, and the expressed need for sustainable cities in order to combat hunger, poverty & inequality, and support the global sustainability plan. Moreover, Ghent was the first city in Flanders to sign the Covenant of Mayors to take a stand as local authority against climate change.

As an active member of the Food Smart Cities for Development project, the City of Ghent organised the international seminar Local Urban Food Policies in the Global Food Sovereignty Debate on 11 and 12 June 2015. During this debate, practices from various cities were discussed extensively, including Cape Town, Montreal, Lisbon, Havana, Chennai and Tegucigalpa. The case studies, which refer to diverse urban contexts, gave an insight into the way (peri)urban food systems contribute to promoting sustainability. The exchange of practices and knowledge provided inspiration for the international network and for the further refinement of the goals of Ghent en Garde.

Main activities

In October 2013 the City of Ghent launched an extensive policy plan, Ghent en Garde. Following the success of the initiative Thursday Veggie Day, launched in 2009, Ghent wants to once again be a pioneer with a strategy to make the food system more sustainable and to turn Ghent into a climate-neutral city by 2050.

The document in attachment gives a detailed overview of the ambitions Ghent has for each of the five strategic goals. The current document provides a short summary, as well as the inclusion of concrete examples of the joint efforts with citizen, companies, knowledge institutions and civil society organizations.

- **SG1. A shorter, more visible food chain**

The first goal focuses on boosting contacts and relationships between producers and consumers. Ghent strives to eliminate the intermediaries between producers and consumers as much as possible, so as to create fair, efficient food chains, allowing consumers to get an idea of the real value of their food. This will ultimately result in more respect between producers and consumers, as well as more space for agriculture, both in and around the city.

Example 1-SG1 ***The Ledeborg farmers' market***

In 2015 we launched a new weekly farmers' market in Ledeborg. The participating farmers and market traders offer a vast range of fresh, local products, from free-range eggs to cheese and dairy, fruit and vegetables, potatoes, bread, flour, organic beef, fresh herbs etc. Ghent has six farmers' markets in all.

Example 2-SG1 ***BE O: a fresh-produce market at Bourdon Arcade***

BE O (Be Organic) is a shop selling organic products that draws on the principle of the early-morning fresh market. This shop mainly sells products supplied directly by the producer, without the need for intermediaries, from fruit and vegetables to cheese, bread, rice, quinoa, millet, dried fruit, olive oil, wine, coffee and other dried goods. Meat is offered cut and vacuum packed. This new shop goes by the motto "from farmer to plate, from field to fork" and targets not only consumers, but also caterers and restaurants.

Example 3 – SG1 ***Vooruit café serves authentic Ghent products***

Vooruit Arts Centre wants to serve authentic Ghent products by using locally cultivated and processed foods as much as possible. The chefs are joining forces with suppliers and new partners to look for sustainable alternatives. Day in, day out, 150 to 200 meals are consumed at Vooruit. Given these quantities, Vooruit can guarantee both suppliers and partners stable sales volumes, motivating them to make a shift towards a more sustainable food production. In this framework, Vooruit was one of the two winners of the Korte Keten Wedstrijd, a competition organised by the City of Ghent focusing on short supply chains.

Example 4 – SG1 ***Oogstgoed: where farming and heritage go hand in hand***

Oogstgoed is a CSA farm (Community Supported Agriculture) managed by two farmers, Rony Nekkebroeck and Benny Van de Velde, at the Coninxdonck castle in Gentbrugge. Rony was given the opportunity to lease a 2-hectare field on the castle estate. Following discussions with the City of Ghent, Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos (the Agency for Nature and Forestry) and Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed (Flanders Heritage Agency), business took off. Rony and Benny are using 1 hectare of this land to cultivate vegetables, and they are also restoring the old, historic orchard to its former glory.

Example 5 – SG1 ***Heiveld: brownfields get a green touch***

Brownfields owned by the PCSW residential care centre Het Heiveld in Sint-Amandsberg are being used by the social workplaces Compaan and Labeur to cultivate vegetables and herbs, which are used at Le Petit Botanique, a restaurant in the city centre which uses produce from urban farms. Both the restaurant and the urban-agriculture project promote social employment, and the elderly inhabitants of Het Heiveld enthusiastically share their gardening experience as well.

Example 6 – SG1: ***Shared gardens: looking for the perfect match***

A shared garden is (part of) a private garden that is leased to someone who wants to cultivate vegetables. Via the website of Ghent en garde, people willing to share and lease (part of) their gardens can find each other via simple ads.

▪ **SG2. More sustainable food production and consumption**

Individually, jointly or professionally – the aim of Ghent is to guarantee a safe, sustainable, high-quality, honest and healthy food production, with an eye for animal welfare. The city also strives for more sustainable consumption patterns. Ghent goes for initiatives that aim to bring sustainable food to the table day in, day out.

Example 1 – SG2 ***The Boerenbond innovation support centre***

Innovatiesteunpunt (innovation support centre) is an initiative launched by Boerenbond (the Farmers' Union) and Landelijke Gilde (the Rural Guilds) in collaboration with Cera and KBC. It is a specialized service that assists agricultural and horticultural companies in their quest for change. The centre's consultants answer farmers' questions on energy and environmental engineering (energy-saving measures, renewable energy production, waste recycling etc.), business development (HR policy, product development, marketing strategies, creation of added value) and rural innovation (cooperation between local governments, inhabitants and entrepreneurs in the countryside).

Example 2 – SG2 ***Landwijzer gives aspiring organic farmers a helping hand***

The non-profit organization Landwijzer is a specialized training centre in Flanders for organic and biodynamic agriculture and food, offering both courses and assistance to established organic farming businesses and aspiring organic farmers alike. Landwijzer supports the development of biodynamic agriculture, natural beekeeping, CSA initiatives and access to farming for young, aspiring farmers.

Example 3 – SG2 ***Thursday Veggie Day***

If we reduce our meat intake, we also drastically reduce the carbon footprint of our diet immediately. Why? Because cattle breeding and meat consumption have a major impact on the environment. The Thursday Veggie Day campaign aims to encourage everyone to eat a tasty vegetarian dish at least once a week. Skipping meat and/or fish once a week, and eating lots of fruit and vegetables instead, that is the idea behind this initiative. If all the inhabitants of Ghent jumped in, the city would register a CO₂ reduction equalling 19,300 fewer cars on the road. In 2009, Ghent was the first city to officially introduce Thursday Veggie Day. We have since constantly encouraged the inhabitants of the city to eat vegetarian food once a week through countless events and publications, such as a city map with lots of veggie tips. The city's hotels and catering establishments, schools and staff canteens have meanwhile jumped on board.

Example 4 -SG2 ***School lunches? Local, environmentally friendly and fair-trade!***

On 27 April 2015 the approximately 200 pupils of Freinet school De Vlieger were served a 'LEF' lunch. LEF stands for Local, Environmentally-friendly and Fair-trade, the three criteria that the non-profit organization Wervel uses in its bid to make agriculture more sustainable from an economic, environmental and social point of view. The local, environmentally friendly and fair-trade ingredients used for this lunch were supplied by five local organic farmers. Restaurant Avalon, which is located in the city centre, and the Ghent-based bicycle courier Cargo Vélo joined forces to ensure the children enjoyed a tasty, fresh, seasonal and healthy meal. Through this concrete initiative, the Urban Agriculture Working Group Ghent wants to prove it can achieve its goal of making school lunches more sustainable. The Working Group feels the City of Ghent, with its 4,500 school lunches a day, holds the key to achieving various targets in its coalition agreement. What's more, urban agriculture can give local farmers a serious boost. Moreover, it could create new jobs at catering companies and school kitchens.

▪ **SG3. Create more social added value for food initiatives**

A sustainable food system in Ghent must also guarantee everyone has access to it. Moreover, it should create social added value. Our focus is on strong social cohesion and more social employment. Education must maximise our efforts in the long term. We also need sound knowledge building on access to food, among other topics, so as to develop well-founded actions.

Example 1 – SG3 *Urban agriculture hub seeking new business models*

Urban agriculture comes with many benefits, both from a private and from a social perspective. The development of a multidisciplinary hub with an important advisory role can lead to an increase in the area designated for urban agriculture, boost productivity, result in more sustainable food and have a greater social impact. With this in mind, the urban agriculture hub is working to achieve the following five goals: 1. Development of expertise on urban agriculture; 2. Creation of a business model; 3. Development of information packs for start-ups; 4. Assuming an advisory role; 5. Building a network. This project is coordinated by Bond Beter Leefmilieu, Vives and VELT.

Example 2 – SG3 *Fair Food Fest brings the (new) inhabitants of Ghent together*

Fair Food Fest is a celebration of international solidarity promoting sustainable food, i.e. fair-trade and/or local products. Fair Food Fest takes place in Ledeborg, a working-class neighbourhood of Ghent, involving all the local target groups. Local participation allows for the development of an accessible awareness-raising campaign for various groups highlighting the importance of fair trade in local and global food chains. The Fair Food Fest also organized a series of Fair Food Days, between December 2015 and May 2016, to increase participation among local residents and specific target groups. These events consist mainly of a series of fun evenings where the participants prepare dishes from their country or region in a fun, interactive setting. Moreover, fair-trade products and the story behind them are put in the spotlight. It all starts with a local workshop moderator presenting a specific dish which contains one or more fair-trade and local products.

Example 3 – SG3 *Supporting vegetable gardens at schools*

Various players are committed to giving children an insight into food production. Landelijke Gilde helps primary schools in Flanders create vegetable gardens on site, allowing children to get acquainted with and enjoy the world of gardening. The organization provides both financial and educational support. VELT offers workshops and educational packs on sustainable food and also focuses on school vegetable gardens. Last but not least, experts

from the City of Ghent assist schools in the management of their vegetable gardens and organise workshops for schools.

- **SG4. Reduce food waste**

Nowadays, about one third of the food produced is wasted, mainly at the beginning and at the end of the chain. Ghent is therefore doing many efforts to make the city food system more efficient, by looking for new markets and alternative processing opportunities for food surpluses.

Example 1 – SG4 *The Restorestje box: take your leftovers home without shame*

In 2015, 100 restaurants in Ghent distributed a total of 11,000 boxes to their customers to take home their leftovers. This results in less food that ends up in the bin and customers can enjoy their leftovers at home. In just one year, 100 restaurants in Ghent have jumped on the bandwagon, and every month, more and more establishments are added to the list. Every week, these restaurants give some 25 Restorestje boxes to customers who want to take their leftovers home. Ghent organised a survey in which all participating restaurants agreed that customers are very happy with this initiative.

Example 2 – SG4 *System to distribute food surpluses to social organisations*

The Ghent CPSW has joined forces with the city administration to develop a system to distribute food surpluses from retail and other sources to a range of social organisations, so as to reach the most vulnerable inhabitants of the city. To achieve this, Ghent will explore how the available food surpluses can be used to provide people living in poverty with healthy, affordable (or even free) food, whilst respecting their dignity. As part of a preparatory study Ghent carried out a survey among supermarkets, distributors and food banks to find out which initiatives currently exist. Using their answers as a basis Ghent came up with several scenarios of the possible roles the new distribution system could play in addition to, and in support of, the ongoing initiatives. Ghent eventually decided to go for the scenario that includes transport support and interim storage.

- **SG5. Optimal re-use of food waste as raw materials**

Even when food ends up as waste, it needn't be lost. This waste can be re-used as a raw material, creating environmental added value.

Example 1 – SG5 *Het Spilvarken: the city as a food cycle*

In 2014 the non-profit organisation Het Spilvarken launched a pilot project as part of Atelier De Stad (The City Studio): raising three pigs in the city at the Bijloke site. Can pig raising be re-introduced in the city? A core team joined forces to study this question in a creative manner. They identified local food waste streams and used them as pig feed. Over 40 neighbours joined the initiative as 'co-farmers' to help take care of the pigs. The three pigs became a link in a small, yet precious cycle that created added value in many fields: local food waste was processed, unused space was temporarily put to good use, more nature was introduced to the city and a dynamic debate was launched on (meat) consumption and the food industry. Last but not least, sustainable meat was produced. In the next few years, Het Spilvarken wants to introduce pigs and chickens to several neighbourhoods around the city. Moreover, a 'food lab' will be set up to develop or support small-scale partner projects focusing on food in the city. Het Spilvarken sees the city as one large food cycle. The aim is to tap into unused spaces, waste and other surpluses, linking them to social energy, know-how and time. Het Spilvarken

wants to map out this ecosystem involving raw materials and players to create new links and create added value from an environmental, economic and social point of view.

Example 2 – SG5 ***Aquaponics: a closed-loop system for fish, vegetables and herbs***

Urban Smartfarm launched an aquaponics pilot project in which fish are farmed and vegetables are cultivated together in a closed-loop system. Two sea containers were converted into mobile production units. One is used to grow plants based on hydroculture, while the other contains water with fish that fertilise the plants. On the roof of the containers herbs are cultivated in vertical herb gardens bathing in natural light. Inside the containers LED lights are used. This system is sustainable in more ways than one: optimum use of space because temporary brownfields are equipped with mobile systems and vertical cultivation methods are used; a low impact on mobility thanks to urban production and transport using cargo bikes; and last but not least, very efficient use of raw materials as there is no need for additional fertilisers or irrigation. The fish, vegetables and herbs produced are supplied to hotels, restaurants, shops and distributors of local food packages.

Evaluation

As indicated, ‘Ghent en garde’ includes many practices/initiatives on different levels. Some of these practices are already implemented for several years and have been evaluated thoroughly through surveys or interviews. The general opinion on the Ghent en garde policy and the online forum was evaluated through a survey.

- Example 3 – SG2 ***Thursday Veggie Day***

Thursday Veggie Day was initiated in 2009 in Ghent. Evaluations were conducted in 2011 and 2013 via survey research. The survey was used to assess the reach of, involvement in, and facilitators and barriers for Thursday Veggie Day among a representative sample of inhabitants of Ghent (n=400), Brussels (n=400), Antwerpen (n=400), Flanders (n=1000), the latter to act as a comparison.

- Example 1 – SG4 ***The Restorestje box: take your leftovers home without shame***

8 restaurants were evaluated via an interview by telephone; 9 restaurants were evaluated via an email survey; 26 customers were involved in an online survey.

Main results

The general appreciation of Gent en garde was very positive among the inhabitants of Ghent.

- Example 3 – SG2 ***Thursday Veggie Day***

The results of the survey in 2013 indicated that 80% knew about the campaign Thursday Veggie Day; 1 in 6 inhabitants of Ghent eat at least one time per week a vegetarian meal, 10% participates in the weekly vegetarian day on Thursday, 1 in 8 inhabitants of Ghent participate several times per month. 14.7% became a part-time vegetarian. In comparison with other cities in Flanders, Ghent seems to be the city with most vegetarians or inhabitants with a part-time vegetarian eating pattern.

Top three motivations to eat meat were taste, habit and education; Top motivations to eat vegetarian were new tastes, health, environment/climate change, palatability, animal welfare; Barriers to eat vegetarian were price, not enough cooking skills, limited options at the restaurant, limited interest.

- Example 1 – SG4 *The Restorestje box: take your leftovers home without shame*

The restaurants indicated that per week 0-25 restorestjes were taken home by their clients. They think it is important to limit food waste. Sometimes customers ask if they can take the restorestjes. Both personnel and customers are enthusiastic about the practice but also provide several suggestions for improvement.

Key success factors and barriers

- The involvement of different sectors in this policy and the fact that so many actors also support these practices.
- It is normally not easy to receive the financial means for such kind of initiatives but as the ideas for this project were included in a coalition agreement in Ghent of some years ago this led to good collaboration between the different departments in the city of Ghent.
- The financial aspect can be an important barrier but till now Ghent has found the financial means for this policy.

INHERIT Perspective

Ghent en garde entails a food policy that is developed to create a sustainable food system in Ghent. This food policy entails many innovative, local and sustainable food strategies that focus both on changing 1) the BEHAVIOURS of all actors in the food system: namely consumers - including all socio-economic groups-, retailers, organisations such as school and workplace, and producers; and 2) the ENVIRONMENT (e.g., creating better access to local, healthy products – influencing EXPOSURE/EXPERIENCE). This policy has been included because it has proven to create a positive impact on health, equity and sustainability.

More information

A detailed booklet with the strategic and operational goals, and concrete examples is included as an attachment.

<https://gentengarde.stad.gent/>

Contact

Katrien Verbeke – City of Ghent, Department of Environment & Climate,
Katrien.Verbeke@stad.gent