

# LOCAL PRODUCTS + HEALTHY FOOD = HAPPY CHILDREN: FUNDÃO'S FIRST FOOD POLICY

## Key information

- Location: **Fundão (Portugal)**
- Population: **29 000**
- Involved in URBACT network: **AGRI-URBAN**
- More information: <http://urbact.eu/agri-urban>



Fundão has long been a source of good food and wine. Facing a shrinking population, this municipality in central Portugal created an export-focused Producers' Club in 2012, winning prizes from Abu Dhabi to Macau. But the city joined the URBACT AGRI-URBAN Network to seek for local, sustainable solutions: Producers and consumers helped build a plan to serve local, organic food in public canteens, boosting Fundão's economy — and healthy reputation.

Micaela Gil, Fundão municipality's European Project Manager, discovered AGRI-URBAN while browsing the URBACT project ideas database: "As an urban-rural area, we were looking for new solutions, new knowledge. We wanted to explore short circuits of production and consumption, job creation for young people in agriculture, public procurement... So we contacted Baena (ES), the Lead Partner of the network, and were accepted — from more than seventy towns!"

Fundão joined ten other small and medium cities in AGRI-URBAN to improve agri-food markets and link producers with local communities. Recognising the economic, health and environmental benefits, their mayors and representatives gathered in Mollet del Vallès (ES) in June 2016 to sign a 'local food policy and employment' manifesto, each committing to build an Integrated Action Plan.

### A plan full of actions

After two years studying and sharing good practices with partner cities, and monthly meetings with a new 'local action group' of farms, schools, universities, canteen suppliers, public offices and associations (URBACT Local Group), Fundão published its 2018-2020 action plan.

Implementation started immediately. A local 'short circuit territory' was defined using Portugal's delimitations for direct sale. And — inspired by Pays des Condruces (BE) — Fundão interviewed local producers, creating a database of farmers and their produce.

"Results went far beyond expectations," says AGRI-URBAN Expert Miguel Sousa. "When starting the network, Fundão didn't have a food policy, but now they do, and they're even



Fundão produces cherries, chestnuts, peaches, grapes, olive oil and cheese

implementing it in school canteens. Backing healthy food with local and organic products has created new dynamics in the city."

The best place to see this is Silvares primary school at lunchtime, where children are devouring healthy soup, main courses and dessert. Because it has its own kitchen, cooks, and suppliers, the local action group chose this school as a small-scale pilot — laying the ground for all primary schools to serve fruit and vegetables that are 10% organic and 80% local, by summer 2019. This means a total of 735 meals daily in 29 schools: two supplied by private businesses, and 26 by private institutions with a social solidarity remit.



"URBACT is brilliant because it allows small and medium towns to access and learn from European good practices."

Micaela Gil

Using selection criteria like quality and variety rather than price alone — with public procurement experience from Mollet del Vallès (ES) — the school contracted 'Bio Eco' as their main suppliers. The association of 11 local, certified organic farms, providing fruit, vegetables, honey and cheese, was created in 2018. They sell at local markets, and help farmers go organic. "Bio Eco is one of many good surprises helping this project along the way," says Ms Gil. Others include national decisions supporting organic farming and vegetarian meals (2017), and moves towards giving municipalities more control over college food.

When the children finish eating, they empty leftovers into buckets — trying to throw away less than their friends. Uneaten food is then weighed, and orders adjusted. "It helps show that moving to locally produced organic food isn't more expensive: Diminishing food waste reduces costs, and means you can buy produce that's a bit more expensive but of better quality," says Ms Gil.

### Main inspiration: an all-organic partner

Fundão plans to increase the proportion of organic local canteen food progressively as demand — and supply — increases. The relatively low initial goal of 10% is one of many practical tips from Mouans-Sartoux (FR), where almost 100% of school canteen food is organic. Their good practice, developed over 20 years, is being transferred in the URBACT Transfer BioCanteens network.

"The advantage of learning with URBACT," says Ms Gil, "is that you get to work with partners who've already built up long experience. Mouans-Sartoux inspired us, and showed us how to develop something similar quickly in Fundão."



Lunch leftover bins reduce food waste in Silvares school

"URBACT is brilliant because it allows small and medium towns to access and learn from European good practice," says Ms Gil. "This was our first truly European experience. Through these exchanges we've become an URBACT family. We're inspired by others, while improving our own local situation."

### Organic future

The Silvares pilot is showing producers, families and institutions the health and economic benefits of organic local food and reduced waste, inciting others to follow. Inspired by Södertälje's (SE) municipal Diet Unit, Fundão will provide training and information to farmers, school canteen cooks, and its 83 social infrastructures — from hospitals to retirement homes.

Fundão has applied to Interreg Sudoe to fund further actions, including a new digital platform and app with financial incentives for schools to contract local organic suppliers.

"The Municipality of Fundão's participation in AGRI-URBAN has been a unique sharing and learning experience," says Mayor Paulo Fernandes. "It's a worthwhile project that will contribute to healthier food in schools and enhance local products, but in reality we have seen an even deeper and wider impact through the potential to decisively influence the community in a change of consumption habits."



Fundão cherries: an iconic territorial brand