



Norwegian Ministry
of Agriculture and Food

Report

Norway's Path Towards a Sustainable Food System

Key elements of the Norwegian Government's work on sustainable food system, including the national dialogue and written inputs



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Foto: Landbruks- og matdepartementet



Introduction

At global level food systems face major challenges in terms of ensuring food security and healthy diets for all, ensuring livelihoods of farmers and fisherfolk and doing so within the limits of our planet. Food production and consumption, including processing, marketing, transport, recycling and dealing with food waste are all activities closely linked to the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda. The critical role of sustainable food systems as key to achieving progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals was put on the agenda by the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 and by the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment in 2023.

Food system transformation is a continuous process. In Norway, increased food production, improved environmental outcomes, healthy diets, value creation and competitiveness in the food value chain throughout the country are key elements for achieving sustainable food systems. Addressing these challenges through a food systems lens requires a holistic approach that addresses all three dimensions of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental), and that engages all actors in the food system.

Against this backdrop, a second national dialogue on sustainability in the Norwegian food system was held on 20 October 2023. The dialogue was convened by State Secretary Wenche Westberg from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, on behalf of the Norwegian Government. Representatives from the private sector, civil society, research organisations and local and regional governments shared views and discussed proposals for future pathways towards sustainable food systems that simultaneously consider national goals for food security, increased national food production, access to nutritious food, reduced environmental impact, and better income for the food producers.

The dialogue was supplemented with an invitation for written submissions, which all can be accessed on [the government's website](#).

This document is an English summary of the report "[Sustainability in the Norwegian Food System - National Dialogue and Written Inputs](#)". The report also outlines some key elements of the Norwegian Government's work on food systems and provides valuable suggestions for further work on sustainable food systems in Norway.



1 Key elements of the Norwegian Government's work towards a more sustainable food system

Norway is well positioned to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Norway is a highly developed democratic country, in which the state plays a strong role in strategic areas of the economy. The majority of the population has a high standard of living and prosperity. However, Norway also faces challenges related to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. According to [The Voluntary National Review 2021 Norway](#), the key challenges for achieving the SDGs in general are related to unsustainable consumption patterns, greenhouse gas emissions and the state of biodiversity.

Furthermore, the Norwegian food system must also be transformed in a more sustainable direction since the establishment of sustainable food systems is a crucial part of achieving the SDGs.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Norway has longstanding traditions for private-public and cross-sectoral cooperation. The annual negotiations between the government and the farmers' unions and the reindeer husbandry sector are key measures for ensuring sustainable

development. The negotiations are the most important financial instrument for strengthening the resilience and adaptiveness of the agricultural sector and securing a viable income for the farmers. The government's agreement with the farmers' unions on targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions is another example of a strong emphasis on cooperation.

Value creation in the food-chain, employment, and settlement throughout the country


The Norwegian value chain for food is diverse and of great importance for employment, settlement, and value creation throughout the country. Norway has around 37 600 agricultural enterprises¹. The Norwegian marine fishing fleet consists of 5 607 vessels². The Food Industry employs around 52 000 people³. There is considerable potential for the blue and green sectors to further develop and contribute to the ongoing green transition.

The seafood industry is of great importance to the Norwegian economy, and for value creation, settlement, and employment along the coast. Seafood exports in 2023 were worth NOK 172 billion.

¹ Statistics Norway 2023

² Directorate of Fisheries 2023

³ Statistics Norway 2021



Safeguarding the competitiveness of the food sector and the sustainable management of the natural resources that it relies on, calls for active policies.

Towards a more climate- and environmentally friendly production

Measures to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and environmental footprints are important goals in the agricultural and fishery sectors. Food production causes emissions to air and water, and thus has a considerable impact on the environment and biodiversity. In 2022, GHG emissions from agriculture amounted to 4.6 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent. This represented 9.4 percent of total GHG emissions in Norway. Emissions from agriculture have been reduced by 6.8 percent since 1990. According to a report by ZeroKyst⁴, direct emissions from the Norwegian seafood industry in 2021 were estimated to be somewhere between 1.6 and 1.9 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent. Reducing GHG emissions from vessels is central to the seafood industry, along with reducing emissions from feed for farmed fish and livestock.

Sustainable feed has been identified as a major mission in the long-term research priorities of the government. The goal of the mission is that “all feed for farmed fish and animals will come from sustainable sources and will contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the food systems”. The mission is part of increased efforts to promote synergies between the blue and green sectors.

It is of high priority to maintain the resource base for future food production through active soil conservation, farmland preservation, sustainable management of the stock of genetic resources used for further plant, livestock, and fish breeding, and to reduce climate and environmental impacts from agriculture and aquaculture.


Food safety, animal and plant health

Healthy animals and plants, animal welfare, and food safety are essential elements of a sustainable food system. Norway has a low use of antibiotics and pesticides. Maintaining the good status requires continuous efforts. The spread of pests across borders, climate change, and outbreaks of contagious animal diseases are among the major threats to plant and animal health, both in Norway and globally. The One Health-approach is crucial for achieving a robust and resilient food system.

A healthy population

Healthy food is the foundation for a healthy population and sustainable development. In Norway, the intake of fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, fish and other seafood is too low, while the consumption of red meat is higher than recommended. The intake of salt, added sugar, and saturated fats also needs to be reduced. Changes in food consumption may lead to structural changes of agricultural production, which in turn may influence greenhouse gas emissions from primary production. The food industry collaborates with the Norwegian government to improve human diets through the “Partnership for a Healthier Diet”. The government is looking into measures to better protect children against the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages.

⁴ «Kartlegging av utslipp fra fiskeri og havbruk i Norge» (zerokyst.no)



Efforts to improve people's diets were discussed during the dialogue, including such measures as labelling, pricing, foods in kindergarten and schools, increased knowledge about foods and nutrition, availability, food culture and public procurements.

The Nordic countries have cooperated and published Nordic nutritional recommendations since the 1980s. The sixth revision of the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations (NNR2023) was published in June 2023. For the first time, climate and other environmental impacts of the diet were included in addition to purely food-based dietary recommendations. The Norwegian Directorate of Health will revise the National Dietary Guidelines based on NNR2023, but its dietary advice will be based on the relationship between diet and health only. The climate and environmental impacts will be discussed, but not integrated into the advice. The new guidelines will be published in August 2024.

Reduction of food waste and loss

Various processes have been initiated nationally to reduce food waste and loss. The government, together with the food industry, aims to halve food waste in Norway by 2030. If this target is achieved, it will not be necessary to produce as much food, and greenhouse gas emissions from food pro-

duction will decline as a result. The Government's most important tool to reduce food waste is its agreement with the retail sector. Between 2015 and 2020, food waste was reduced by 9.5 percent. To sufficiently reduce food waste, efforts in all stages of the food chain need to be intensified.

In February 2023, the Ministry of Climate and Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food jointly appointed a committee to assess measures and instruments that could contribute to Norway reaching the 50 percent reduction target by 2030. The report was presented in January 2024 and will be followed up by the government.

Norway takes an active global role

Norway is an active participant in the global work on improving sustainability in the food system, focusing on food safety, climate change adaptation, biological diversity, and genetic resources. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a good example of the latter.

Food security is among Norway's top priorities in development cooperation. The strategy "[Combining forces against hunger- a policy to improve food self- sufficiency](#)" particularly addresses climate change and the livelihoods of small-scale farmers.



2 Key messages from the national dialogue and written submissions

Environmentally friendly food production

To ensure the development of a more environment-friendly food production, there is a need to:

- Adapt to climate change and simultaneously reduce the environmental footprint from the food sector, through good framework conditions that ensure recruitment to the sector.
- Improve and maintain soil health, e.g., by drawing on knowledge from organic agriculture.
- Enhance circular and local value chains, and fully explore the potential of utilizing national resources for feed production.
- Optimize the use of grazing livestock as a tool for utilizing Norway's natural resources.
- Assign high priority to farmland preservation, given that only three percent of Norway's total area is arable land.
- Increase the efforts to reduce food waste.

Sustainable feed in the fish and livestock sectors

To increase the sustainability of fish and livestock feed, there is a need to:

- Ensure that fish and livestock feed comes from sustainable sources, thereby contributing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the food system.
- Reduce the import of soy products as ingredients for fish and livestock feed.
- Make use of national resources for feed production as a way of increasing sustainability and national self-sufficiency.
- Also consider the need for imported feed in future food production.
- Reduce bottlenecks, such as unnecessary regulations, that prevent the development of new feedstocks and more circular value chains.
- Increase funding to ensure the use and upscaling of national protein sources.
- Use life cycle analyses to measure climate footprints.
- Further discuss the diverging views on the potential role of genetic engineering for achieving increased sustainability.



Competitiveness, value creation and employment in the food value chain

To increase competitiveness, value creation and employment in the food value chain, it is crucial to:

- Enable the establishment of a diverse range of food businesses throughout the country as a basis for an economically viable and prosperous food sector. To achieve this, producers must benefit from value creation in the food value chain.
- Secure economic sustainability in primary production to achieve social and environmental sustainability.
- Promote social sustainability, rural development, and settlement throughout the country as important synergies for both the blue and green sectors.
- Support the establishment of strong local food value chains, which are key to ensuring a close relationship between food producers and consumers. Cooperation between large and small businesses and clusters that enhance positive synergies must be promoted, as well as measures and incentives directed at small-scale businesses.
- Encourage innovation and the implementation of new technologies as key to strengthening competitiveness throughout the value chain. Small-scale businesses' access to public instruments was emphasized.
- Utilize public procurement as a tool to strengthen local value chains.
- Enhance knowledge transfer through collaboration in clusters. Policy instruments must be adapted to small enterprises.

- Apply technology and innovation as driving forces for a more sustainable food system, thus contributing to a more efficient use of resources and a more resilient production.
- Strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation and cooperation throughout the whole value chain.

Healthy and sustainable diets

To achieve and maintain healthy and sustainable diets, it is important to:

- Underline that a diet in line with national dietary guidelines promotes health but is also a sustainable diet.
- Take the broader food environment into account. This includes improved accessibility to healthy food, knowledge and skills about nutrition and food preparation, and maintaining the social and cultural aspects of food.
- Note that there are diverging views on which factors to include in a possible sustainability food label.
- Not only emphasize price as a category in public procurements. Other sustainability considerations such as climate and environmental impact, animal welfare and locally produced food were also highlighted as important assessment aspects.
- Fully explore available measures that can help promote a healthy, sustainable diet, in particular measures directed at increasing the consumption of fish, whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.
- Take the cultural aspect of food into consideration when defining a sustainable diet.
- Ensure that food labelling must be informative, easy to understand for the consumers and harmonized across Europe.



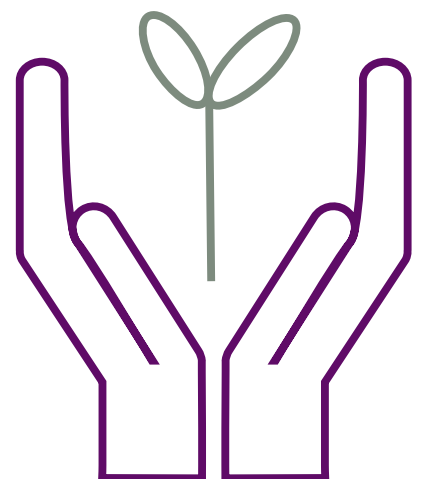
Sustainable global food systems

In terms of Norway's contributions to safeguarding sustainable global food systems, it is important to:

- Strengthen efforts aimed at addressing food insecurity and the impacts of climate change and loss of biodiversity on a global level. Small-scale farmers in developing countries are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- Emphasize that actions on the global and national level are interrelated. Thus, national strategies for self-sufficiency, preparedness and sustainable management of natural resources

reduce vulnerability on a national level while reducing pressure on land use globally. Relevant national-level efforts include work on seed security, reduction of food loss and waste, and the promotion of good agronomic practices.

- Declare that Norway can contribute globally through leadership, capacity-building, knowledge transfer and technology export.
- Note that Norwegian expertise within plant and animal health, as well as the Norwegian experiences with family farming and cooperatives are highly relevant in a global context.
- Give priority to promoting Farmers' Rights and seed security.



3 Next steps

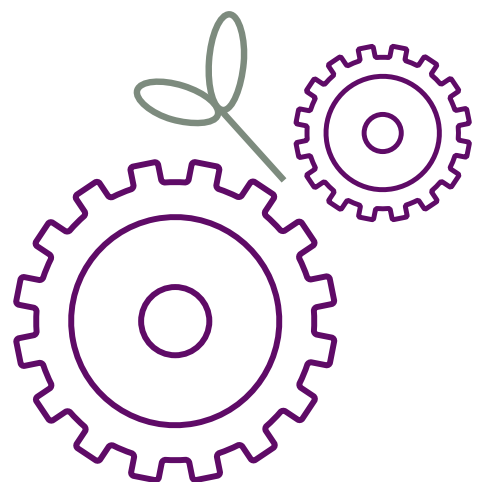
The development of a sustainable food system is a continuous process. The key messages from a broad range of actors summarised in this report provide valuable inputs to the ongoing work of enhancing sustainability in the food system.

The Governments work and policy on sustainable food systems is now being implemented in several ongoing White Papers to the Parliament. A White Paper on increased self-sufficiency in agricultural products and a White Paper about the fisheries quota system was adopted by the Norwegian Parliament in April 2024. Many of the other elements considered in this document are currently addressed in ongoing work on White Papers that will be submitted to the Parliament, for example, White Papers on animal welfare, and the general implementation of the Sustainable Development

Goals. Norway is also working on a new national biodiversity strategy and action plan in time for the Convention on Biological Diversity COP16. A White Paper on climate change will be presented in spring 2025.

The government considers cross-sectoral dialogue and close cooperation among all food system actors to be a useful tool for ensuring a holistic approach to addressing food system sustainability. As a follow up of the national dialogue, there is a strong momentum to continue this process at the national, regional, and local level.

The Norwegian Government remains committed to the UN Food Systems process and looks forward to the next stocktaking meeting in 2025.



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