

MUFPP EUROPE REGIONAL FORUM & EUROCITIES WORKING GROUP FOOD MEETING

*Beyond the market stall: Reimagining food
markets in cities as key infrastructures*

20–22 May 2026, Florence, Italy



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INTRODUCTION, PROMOTERS AND SUPPORTERS

The **transformation of urban food systems** represents one of the most critical challenges and opportunities for contemporary European cities. As concentrated hubs of consumption, metropolitan areas hold significant **leverage to reshape supply chains, promote environmental sustainability, and ensure equitable access to healthy food**. Resilient food governance requires moving **beyond isolated local actions** toward systemic infrastructure that **bridges the urban-rural divide**.

To address these challenges, the **13th MUFPP European Regional Forum** was convened in Florence from May 20–22, 2026, under the guiding theme: "***Beyond the Market Stall: Reimagining Food Markets in Cities as Key Infrastructures***."

This forum served as a high-level space for European **local authorities, policymakers, and agri-food stakeholders** to explore how food policy can drive innovation in urban markets. Rather than treating markets merely as commercial real estate or temporary points of exchange, the forum repositioned both **retail farmers' markets and wholesale operations as strategic, permanent public infrastructure**. These hubs deliver public value by strengthening regional self-sufficiency, advancing circular economy principles, mitigating food waste, and guaranteeing social inclusion.

The event was co-organized and supported by a network of European urban food leaders:

- **Host City:** The **City of Florence, Italy**, anchoring the forum through its local food strategies, historic public markets, and wholesale logistics networks.
- **Network Leads:** The **Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) Secretariat** and the **Eurocities Working Group Food**, driving the pan-European urban food agenda and fostering peer-to-peer municipal learning.
- **Project Partners:** The **CLEVERFOOD Project** (funded under the European Union's Horizon Europe programme), dedicated to accelerating food system transformation and mobilizing national-level dialogues to inform EU policy.
- **Institutional Support:** **The Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) Thematic Partnership on Food**—jointly coordinated by the Municipality of Milan and the Lisbon Metropolitan Area—which leads capacity building and trainings for participating authorities.

AGENDA OVERVIEW

The three-day forum was structured to move progressively from strategic national policy dialogue to localized site evaluations, culminating in institutional training and capacity building.

Day 1: Policy & Dialogue

- **The CLEVERFOOD Italian National Dialogue:** This session brought together Italian city representatives and policymakers, market managers, researchers, and food advocates to discuss challenges and opportunities for markets in Italian cities.

Day 2: Local & Regional Network Progress

- **Institutional Welcome:** Opening speeches by the Vice Mayor of Milan and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Eurocities Working Group Food
- **Global & Regional Network Progress:** An update from the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Secretariat and Eurocities on membership, partnership, projects and EU policy developments.
- **The Work of Florence on Food:** A deep dive into the host city's local food policies, mapping its strategy to integrate short supply chains into municipal governance.
- **Field Visit – Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio:** An on-site study visit of one of Florence's most iconic historic retail markets, evaluating how it balances traditional neighbourhood commerce with modern sustainability goals.
- **Interactive Workshop “The Role of Markets in Urban Food Policies”:** A collaborative working session where participants co-designed governance frameworks, treating retail and farmers' markets as strategic public infrastructure rather than just commercial spaces.

Day 3: Field visit & Training

- **Wholesale Market “Mercatir” Site Visit:** A technical study visit of Florence's logistics and wholesale food distribution infrastructure.
- **In-House Food Bank “Banco Alimentare”:** A first-hand experience of the circular economy in action, examining the integration of food recovery systems directly within wholesale hubs to minimize organic waste and support vulnerable populations.
- **Training on Markets by The Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) Partnership on Food:** A participatory capacity-building session providing actionable tools and methodology transfer for managing short food supply chains at the municipal level.

THE CLEVERFOOD ITALIAN NATIONAL DIALOGUE

The forum commenced on May 20, 2026, with the **second chapter of the Italian National Dialogues**, organized under the umbrella of the European Union-funded CLEVERFOOD project. Following an inaugural dialogue held in Milan in March and preceding a final scheduled session at Terra Madre in Turin, this **closed-door roundtable** convened academic experts, third-sector advocates, and municipal leaders from key Italian cities—including **Florence, Milan, Turin, Rome, Parma, Bologna, and Trento**.



Moderated by the Municipality of Milan, the encounter abandoned traditional, top-down presentations in favor of a fluid, **peer-to-peer exchange** structured around two primary thematic pillars:

- **Markets as Key Food Policy Hubs:** Participants evaluated how municipal food strategies can **transition urban markets away from purely commercial** real estate and transform them into **community and logistics hubs** for the short food supply chain. The discussion centred on identifying socio-environmental indicators to measure **market impacts on neighbourhood health and food accessibility**.
- **Governance and Regulatory Barriers:** The dialogue addressed **rigidities within the existing Italian legislative framework**—such as Legislative Decree governing direct farm retail, Law on zero-kilometre supply chains, and municipal public land concessions. Attendees suggested concrete political recommendations aimed at **harmonizing urban strategies**, scaling local food security initiatives, and **building systemic resilience against global food supply disruptions**. These recommendations will directly inform the upcoming high-level multi-level governance debates with regional, national, and EU officials in Turin in September 2026, during the Slow Food Event Terra Madre Salone del Gusto.

MUFPP REGIONAL FORUM EUROPE & EUROCITIES WORKING GROUP FOOD MEETING

INSTITUTIONAL GREETINGS

The morning of May 21, 2026, commenced at the Biblioteca delle Oblate—a historic civic library repurposed as a public gathering and study space. The **opening session** served as the formal introductory plenary, bringing together Italian and European municipal leaders.



The institutional greetings were delivered by a panel of politicians and municipal representatives:

- **Anna Scavuzzo** (Vice Mayor of Milan in charge of Food Policy) emphasized that urban food policies must **transition from abstract concepts into concrete physical spaces, framing markets as vital public infrastructure**. She stressed their evolutionary role from traditional logistical nodes into social anchors, circular economy hubs, and short supply chain networks capable of buffering global climate and economic disruptions.
- **Panu Vuorimaa** (Vice Chair of the Eurocities Working Group Food / City of Vantaa) and **Andrea Magarini** (Director, Food Policy Department, Municipality of Milan and Chair of Eurocities Working Group Food), along with **Arnaldo Melloni** (Environment Department, Municipality of Florence), co-introduced the working session, outlining the critical intersection of European municipal cooperation and localized agri-food innovation.

GLOBAL & REGIONAL NETWORK PROGRESS



Following the greetings, the MUFPP Secretariat and the Eurocities Working Group Food leadership presented a comprehensive review of **continental food policy trends and project updates**:

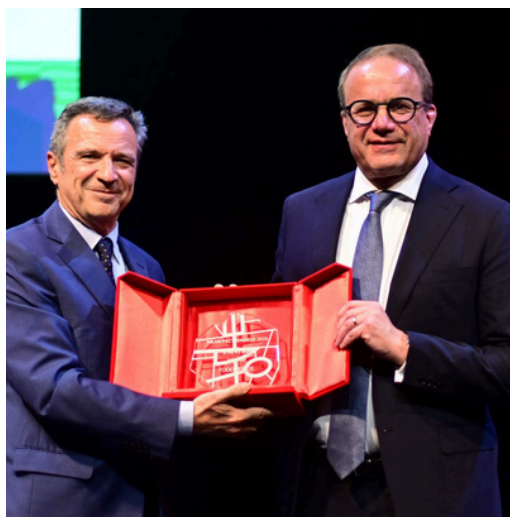
The MUFPP Europe Leadership Plan (2026–2028)

Drafted by newly elected **Steering Committee** members, **Barcelona** and **Lisbon** along with **Milan**, the plan establishes a mandate to deepen municipal capacity for local food strategy implementation. It prioritizes **strengthening the collective voice of cities** in EU-level regulatory updates, specifically targeting the upcoming revision of the **Public Procurement Directive** to unlock sustainable food sourcing options.

Milan Pact Awards (MPA) 2025 Report

The session highlighted that Europe remains the most active region within the Milan Pact, contributing with **119 food policy practices to the MPA 2025**. Noteworthy European best practices which were awarded or received a special mention:

- **Vantaa (Finland)**: Awarded for its **“Shared Table” ecosystem, which redistributes 10,000 to 20,000 kg of surplus food weekly** from factories and retailers—including edible food left on school serving lines—to support low-income residents.
- **Copenhagen (Denmark)**: Recognized for an **integrated strategy across its 1,000 public kitchens** that **upskills staff** and uses public meals as a lever for health, education, and climate action, successfully achieving a **32% CO₂ reduction** and an **87.8% organic food share**.



- **Grenoble (France):** Honoured for its **Inter-Territorial Food Project (PAiT)**, which unites 10 urban and rural partners across the Greater Grenoble region to **increase regional food self-sufficiency**, preserve agricultural land, and promote sustainable food access through a shared 2050 strategic vision and a monitoring observatory tracking over **90 system indicators**.
- **Berlin (Germany):** Commended for its **"Know what tastes good!" initiative**, which shapes **students' lifelong eating habits** and highlights food industry careers by offering hands-on cooking workshops, interactive learning modules, and direct excursions to local organic farms and bakeries.
- **Nantes (France):** Celebrated for its **Metropolitan Agricultural Land Strategy**, which secures peri-urban land for sustainable food production by reclaiming **abandoned plots**, acquiring farms to support **new agricultural workers**, and permanently protecting over 4,300 hectares of land to boost local food sovereignty.
- **Turin (Italy):** Awarded for its **school meals programme**, which transformed public food procurement to deliver over 6 million meals annually that prioritize **90-100% organic and local sourcing**, customized diets for cultural and medical needs, and strict social certifications that guarantee fair **labor rights** across the entire supply chain.
- **Liège (Belgium):** Commended for transforming its **wholesale market into a shared short-chain agri-food logistics hub** that supplies over 4,000 daily school meals via local cooperatives.
- **Barcelona (Spain):** Recognized for its **Feedback utilization center** at the Mercabarna wholesale hub, which **recovered 838 tonnes** of unmarketable but wholesome produce **for social redistribution** in 2024 alone.
- **Paris (France):** Celebrated for **environmental data monitoring**, including Paris's target to achieve a complete **single-use plastic exit in collective catering** by 2026.

THE WORK OF FLORENCE ON FOOD

The final segment of the morning shifted **focus on the host city**, featuring three **keynote speakers** detailing the localized **baseline mapping and participatory governance** structures animating the nascent Florence Food Policy:

- **Territorial Mapping: Prof. Filippo Randelli, University of Florence** presented an extensive mapping of the local food system encompassing 189 regional farms. Randelli's spatial analysis demonstrated that **45.2% of farmers' market users walk to these spaces**, with over 93% living within a 10-minute (700-meter) radius. This data-driven catchment area analysis was used to justify a **"right to be close to a farmers' market"** requiring active municipal urban spatial planning rather than relying solely on bottom-up initiatives.
- **The Role of Wholesale Infrastructure: Gianni Tapinassi, Chairman of Mercafir**, outlined the structural scale of Florence's Multipurpose Agri-food Center, which handles 200,000 tons of goods annually across 112 established operators. Tapinassi advocated for a **transition of traditional wholesale spaces into integrated municipal "food hubs"** through digital logistics, last-mile electric vehicle urban distribution, waste recycling benchmarks, and structural partnerships with school canteens and food banks.
- **The Florentine Civil Economy District, Chiara Moretti, Shifting Lab**, detailed the operational framework of **Florence's newly established participatory governance table**. Organized around a shared stakeholder Manifesto, this district functions as a **co-design office** bringing together profit businesses, third-sector bodies, and citizen groups across three thematic working units: lifelong sustainable food education, ecological transition/waste reduction, and human rights/social inclusion.

THE ROLE OF MARKETS IN URBAN FOOD POLICIES: INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

Over the afternoon, delegates convened at the "Saletta Casa delle Donne", a municipal space for women empowerment, for an **interactive workshop** dedicated to **leveraging food markets for sustainable food systems**. The session shifted the focus from theoretical frameworks to active peer-to-peer exchange, tasking municipal representatives with exploring how cities actively blend municipal policy with the daily operations of traditional, farmers', and wholesale markets.

Diverging Regional Perspectives on Farmers' Markets

The interactive workshop exposed distinct structural, economic, and cultural realities across European municipalities, highlighting that the prevalence and **success of farmers' markets** are deeply tied to **geographic and weather conditions** and local cultural attitudes.

The Southern European Experience: Milan, Florence, Bologna, and Trento

In many Southern European countries, markets serve not only as functional places to buy food but also as vibrant, essential spaces for socializing and community interaction.

- **Milan (Italy):** The city presented its extensive infrastructure, which includes **11 farmers' markets on public land and over 15 on private land**. Milan views these markets as key urban infrastructure **essential for connecting the urban core with regional agricultural production systems**. Acting as "supra-local hubs," they effectively concentrate urban demand, provide critical commercial visibility for regional producers, and anchor local economic relationships.
- **Bologna (Italy):** The city highlighted its progressive municipal approach, where a 2022 local regulation fundamentally shifted the landscape. By extending market concessions to five years and permitting integrated food service activities, Bologna successfully **turned its farmers' markets into multi-functional community hubs**. The city's framework formally recognizes the social value of markets, using public calls for tender to grant long-term management to organization partners, ensuring continuity and robust trust between producers and consumers.
- **Trento (Italy):** Trento's contributions focused on structural stakeholder engagement through its established **Nutrire Trento** (Nourish Trento) platform. The city emphasized the **value of co-designed, citizen-driven roundtables** to bridge urban demand with the surrounding Alpine agricultural ecosystem. By building a shared culture of consultation directly into municipal governance, Trento actively addresses regulatory barriers to simplify short supply chains for small-scale mountain producers.

The Central European Continuity: Brno

Brno (Czech Republic): The city showcased a highly consistent, **traditional market** model through its historic Zelný trh (Cabbage Market) square, where a **daily** market operates actively from early spring to late autumn. To champion consumer **transparency and local food chain sustainability**, the city implements a visual, **color-coded** stall and umbrella **system** to distinguish authentic regional growers from third-party resellers:

- **Green Stalls/Umbrellas:** Strictly reserved for vendors selling exclusively self-produced, locally grown goods.
- **Orange Stalls/Umbrellas:** Allocated to merchants selling a hybrid mix of local products and imported/resold produce.

The Northern European Challenges: Kristiansand & Vantaa

In contrast to the high-density and culturally embedded market traditions of the Mediterranean, Northern European delegates highlighted distinct operational and systemic barriers:

- **Kristiansand (Norway):** The city faces unique logistical and financial friction. Local producers frequently report feeling undercompensated for the substantial time spent setting up and staffing physical market stalls. This economic imbalance has led to low vendor motivation and reduced participation.
- **Vantaa (Finland):** Reflecting a different structural approach to food security and redistribution, farmers' markets are not widespread in Vantaa, demonstrating that urban food priorities and infrastructures vary significantly across different European administrative contexts.

Formulating Policy Interventions and Supporting Vendors

During the **collective discussions**, participants explored a variety of tactical approaches and **policy options** designed to better motivate, protect, and support vendors across all regions. Moving from fragmented, bottom-up initiatives to coordinated municipal frameworks requires concrete interventions:

- **Infrastructure upgrades:** Providing permanent, weather-resilient physical structures, energy access, and waste-management systems to reduce the logistical burden on farmers.
- **Financial incentives:** Implementing targeted municipal measures—such as reduced public land-use fees, subsidized stall rents, or streamlined administrative permitting—to offset vendor time and transport costs.
- **Institutional recognition:** Formally integrating markets into municipal urban master plans and food strategies, thereby explicitly valuing the immense social, cultural, and environmental contributions these spaces bring to local communities.

Continuing to Work Together

The workshop concluded by transitioning from peer-to-peer exchange to forward-looking **network alignment**. The meeting served as a vital opportunity to update attending cities on the latest **regulatory and strategic developments** originating from both the Eurocities Working Group Food and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.

Participants mapped out future joint avenues of work, detailing upcoming **collaboration opportunities**, policy initiatives, and knowledge-sharing pipelines. By establishing these continuous communication links, member cities reinforced their commitment to **staying informed** on future activities and collectively advocating for robust municipal food systems at the wider European Union level.

FIELD VISITS

Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio

Following the morning plenary sessions, delegates embarked on a walking field visit to the historic Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio. Operating as **one of Florence's oldest and most deeply rooted traditional neighbourhoods' markets**, Sant'Ambrogio provided a living showcase of the **socio-economic and cultural pillars** discussed earlier in the forum.

Participants observed the day-to-day operations of the indoor stalls—dedicated to fresh meats, cheeses, and regional pantry staples—as well as the vibrant outdoor perimeter hosting local fruit, vegetable, and clothing vendors. The visit offered a concrete look at how a highly localized, high-density market functions as a community anchor. Delegates witnessed firsthand how the **market effectively serves a dense residential catchment area**, balancing traditional retail with short supply chains and maintaining its role as a **vital social space** for multi-generational community interaction.

Wholesale market “*Mercafir*” and in-house Food Bank “*Banco Alimentare*”

The morning of Friday, May 22, 2026, shifted the logistical scale from neighborhood retail to **systemic urban distribution** with a site visit to **Mercafir**, Florence's Multipurpose Agri-food Center.

As the primary wholesale infrastructure for the metropolitan area, Mercafir serves as an example of a **strategic logistics hub** transitioning toward modern food policy objectives.

A central highlight of the visit was the guided tour of the **in-house food bank** operated in partnership with **Banco Alimentare**. This operational integration directly demonstrates how a wholesale market can function as a **circular economy driver**. Participants explored the infrastructure behind the sorting and **redistribution of surplus**, unmarketable, but completely wholesome produce intercepted directly from wholesale operators. By embedding **solidarity flows** and food recovery directly within the primary **commercial hub**, the facility successfully buffers urban food insecurity, minimizes organic waste, and optimizes the regional food network's overall **circularity**.



TRAINING ON MARKETS BY THE URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU PARTNERSHIP ON FOOD

The training session on May 22, 2026, was organized under the framework of the **Thematic Partnership on Food within the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU)**. The Urban Agenda for the EU is a **multi-level governance initiative** designed to **foster collaboration between European cities, member states, and EU institutions** to achieve better regulation, better funding, and better knowledge sharing. Recognizing that food systems are vulnerable to global shocks and administrative fragmentation, the UAEU Partnership on Food advocates for integrating urban food dynamics into formal municipal planning.

This specific training module aimed to **position public, retail, and wholesale markets as active drivers of urban food system transformation**. The training provided **technical tools** and strategic blueprints to show how municipal policies can rethink traditional market spaces to champion social innovation, environmental sustainability, and regional economic resilience.

Summary of the three municipal case studies:

1. Barcelona (Spain) — The "Green Commerce" Project

Barcelona detailed its comprehensive municipal strategy implemented across its extensive network of 38 public markets. To reduce the city's environmental footprint and foster sustainable consumer habits, the municipality launched the "Green Commerce" project. Built around a **localized labelling and signage framework**, the initiative **empowers consumers to immediately identify fresh, high-quality, seasonal, and organic produce** sourced directly from Catalonia. By prioritizing direct supply chains without intermediaries, Barcelona's strategy repositions traditional public markets as primary urban reference points for regional agroecology and low-carbon logistics.

2. Dublin (Ireland) — Navigating Regional and Climate Vulnerabilities

Dublin's case study focused on the historic and structural challenges of operating markets within a Northern European context. The city outlined how its **traditional food spaces**—such as the Temple Bar Food Market—**serve as crucial anchors of urban heritage** but face significant operational friction. These barriers include intense competition from consolidated food stores, a distinct local market culture, and a damp climate that limits outdoor trading for much of the year. To support local vendors and secure urban food proximity, Dublin highlighted the **urgent need for structural municipal interventions**, specifically **advocating for greater allocations of covered physical space** to enable year-round trading and enhanced central business grants for local producers.

3. Bologna (Italy) — Multifunctional Regulatory Innovation

Bologna was presented as a benchmark for overcoming institutional and administrative barriers through innovative local policy. The city introduced **progressive market regulations that fundamentally transformed its spatial governance** by extending market vendor concessions to five years and formally permitting on-site food service activities within market perimeters. These regulatory updates allowed rows of traditional stalls to organically evolve into multifunctional community hubs. Crucially, **Bologna's framework legally recognizes the social value of farmers' markets**, using policy to intentionally strengthen consumer-producer trust, promote high-quality regional food awareness, and stimulate local economic development.

The UAEU Partnership on Food concluded the training by calling on municipalities to adopt a systemic, multi-level governance approach. Rather than relying on fragmented, bottom-up initiatives, cities must leverage their administrative authority to **embed markets into formal urban master plans**, securing healthier, fairer, and more resilient regional food channels.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The MUFPP Europe Regional Forum and Eurocities Working Group Food Meeting in Florence demonstrated that **urban markets** are no longer just places for buying and selling food, but **strategic public infrastructures crucial for resilient local food strategies**.

By mapping distinct municipal experiences—ranging from Milan's supra-local economic anchors and Bologna's five-year multi-functional regulatory concessions, to Brno's visual color-coded vendor transparency tools and Dublin's push for covered trading spaces—the forum highlighted that **city-led governance must proactively support local producers and vendors**.

Furthermore, the field visits to the historic Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio and the large-scale Mercafir wholesale hub underscored how embedding solidarity flows alongside partnerships like Banco Alimentare converts **traditional distribution spaces** into zero-waste, circular economy hubs that directly **mitigate urban food insecurity**.

Ultimately, the event reinforced that cities must abandon fragmented, bottom-up approaches and instead utilise **multi-level governance frameworks** to structurally embed public, retail, and wholesale markets into formal urban master plans, securing a healthier, fairer, and more resilient food future across Europe.



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