

Implementing Transformative Governance for Food Systems & Biodiversity

Five policy recommendations based on the key messages from the Danish EU Presidency Conference on Food Systems and Biodiversity in Copenhagen on 3 December 2025

Why now: Transforming the food system and shaping a resilient and competitive future for agriculture while at the same time delivering on climate and biodiversity targets is not possible without also transforming the governance of the agriculture and food system. The current EU policy window featuring the Vision for Agriculture & Food, the development of CAP post-2027 within the Multiannual Financial Framework, and the recently published Bioeconomy Strategy and the Life Sciences Strategy creates a unique moment to anchor coherent, adaptive, and inclusive governance that delivers for both farmers, citizens and nature.

1) Operationalize inclusive multi-level governance through co-creation and learning-by-doing

Make co-creation and democratic directionality the default: Scale living labs and food policy councils, deploy citizens' assemblies to reduce polarization, and empower municipal-led coordination linked to national/EU steering. Practice plan-act-learn-adapt with transparent dashboards, combine voluntary "carrot" and awareness-raising "sermon" with proportionate "stick" for last-mile delivery. To ensure farmer and citizen support it will be essential to establish and provide trusted processes, legitimate choices, faster barrier-removal and visible public benefits (health, nature, affordability).

2) Make policy coherence the operating principle

Align EU-national-local instruments around shared outcomes (environment, climate, biodiversity, health, competitiveness) with adaptive implementation and feedback loops to provide predictability for farmers and clearer social benefits for citizens.

3) Empower farmers and food producers with deployable innovation and new business models

Streamline implementation, pay for public goods (soil health, biodiversity, nutrient outcomes) via CAP and markets, de-risk adoption with advisory services/AKIS, insurance and blended finance so that innovations work on real farms and in SMEs, while building societal resilience and enhancing quality of life for citizens.

4) Mobilize citizen demand & food environments that reward nature-positive choices

Leverage public procurement (schools, hospitals), education and retail nudges to make healthy, plant-rich and biodiversity-supportive foods easy and affordable, including legumes, vegetables, fruits, seeds and nuts - creating market pull for more plant-based foods and regenerative practices.

5) Put biodiversity & restoration at the core of decisions

Move beyond protection to landscape-scale restoration with actionable indicators (e.g., soil organic carbon, high-diversity landscape features, pollinator proxies) under a Nexus/One-Health lens to steer adaptively and ensure that rewards and public benefits are transparently tracked.

Who needs to do what (2026–2028)?

EU level: Align Commissioners and DGs under VP-level coordination, adopt shared outcomes and monitoring supported by R&I, establish EU-wide MRV, procurement standards and blended finance.

National level: Translate shared outcomes into CAP Strategic Plans & national R&I, create a national steering team to coordinate between ministries and municipalities, and report to the EU

Municipal level: Organize citizens' assemblies, food policy councils and living labs to reduce polarization and mobilize support for transformation and enable co-creation of the future agriculture and food system through pilots on technological, social and governance innovation.