

SYNTHESIS

Cartography and first elements of analysis on local initiatives inspired by Food Social Security



September 2025

Context



Our food system is in crisis: despite its seemingly “low” cost, it damages the environment, weakens farmers and makes quality food inaccessible for many (Secours Catholique et al., 2024). In fact, the French government spends €67 billion per year to offset the negative effects of this system, especially on health and environment.

In this context, since 2020, citizens, researchers (Paturel, Ndiaye, Bricas, et al.) and associations have initiated the idea of a **Food Social Security** (FSS) inspired by the 1946 Social Security system (ISF-Agrista, 2019). This system aims to ensure access to healthy food for everyone, through collective contribution, democratic selection of producers, and citizen governance (Collectif SSA, 2025).

Based on these principles, real-life experiments are emerging in both urban and rural areas throughout France. By empowering citizens to act, these projects reconnect food and democracy. In February 2025, a draft law was submitted to test this system in 20 territories (Assemblée nationale, 2024), however it has not yet been adopted. This approach aims to move away from charitable logic in order to ensure a **genuine right to healthy food for all**.

Research objectives

Driven by an ambitious vision of a universal right for access to Quality Food, the system of Food Social Security has inspired over a hundred local experiments in France since 2019.

To support this momentum, four major funders - ADEME, Banque des Territoires, the Fondation Daniel et Nina Carasso and the Fondation de France – entrusted a national study to Let's Food and Vertigo Lab.

This study aims to map existing experiments, analyze their socio-economic models, and identify the monitoring and evaluation approaches implemented.

Beyond identifying practices, facilitating inspiration and mutualization, the goal is also to highlight how these local experiments contribute to the three founding pillars of the FSS and help fuel the national debate.

Socio-economic model

The socio-economic model refers to the way an initiative organizes its human, financial, and material resources to operate. By adapting to the characteristics of each territory and to the project's objectives, it combines sources of financing, cost allocation, and stakeholder involvement (Definition constructed by Let's Food and Vertigo Lab from : Associations.gouv.fr, 2024 ; Le Mouvement associatif, 2022).

Monitoring and evaluation mechanism

Monitoring and evaluation refers to a set of tools, methods, and processes used to assess the implementation, results, and effects of a project in relation to its defined objectives (Gertler P.J., Martinez M., Premand P., Rawlings L. B. Banque Mondiale. (2011). L'évaluation d'impact en pratique.).

Methodology

Carried out between March and August 2024, this study was based on an exploratory process combining documentary, co-construction of tools, survey by questionnaire, focus group and individual interviews. A methodological proposal was approved by a steering committee (funders) and a committee of experts (researchers), with a statement of intent recalling that the aim was not to evaluate but to provide a better understanding of the experiments.

- A quantitative questionnaire developed with various stakeholders and open for three weeks provided consistent data on 105 initiatives. However it may have limitations in reflecting the complexity of projects. Among these, 32 Food Social Security Funds were chosen to serve as the focus of the analysis. Despite the diversity of Food Democracy models, these were the ones that most embodied the principles of FSS. The results revealed various stages of progress that limit the possibilities for quantitative analysis. This observation reinforces the decision to focus the study on a qualitative approach, which is better suited to understand the complexity of local dynamics.
- Four Focus Groups worked on food democracy dynamics, socio-economic mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation in detail.
- Seven meetings completed the analysis with local and contextual insights.
- A structured analysis scheme was then used to analyze the results according to the main themes of the study.

This study serves as a starting point for further research, which is necessary to support the development of these initiatives in the long term.

Common fund for Food

A common fund for food can be described as a “territorial, multi-stakeholder system based on collective budget management and operating according to a principle of redistribution. Its decision-making system relies on a citizen food council, which serves as a space for popular education, citizenship and empowerment”. (Scherer et al., 2024).



Key figures

105

Food Democracy initiatives identified



Regions
• AURA
• Nouvelle-Aquitaine
• Occitanie
have the most experiments



Experiments with social funds are multiplying throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas.

Most of the funds were launched between the second half of 2024 and the second half of 2025.



FSS funds with more than 300 experimenters

3

53%

Of FSS funds have between 20 and 50 experimenters.

70 %

declared that they aim for universal coverage (a representative sample of the population)



Funds consolidate ecosystems of actors at the territorial level

Collective governance involving public, agricultural, social and economic stakeholders facilitates the establishment and development of the funds.

Experiments with ambitious long-term objectives

- access to sustainable food
- citizen empowerment

23

months on average between the start of deliberations and the first financial transfers

Experiments with short, busy schedules and insufficient resources

- Average annual budget : 299 110 €
- Median annual budget : 129 500 €

An increase in the number of experimenters reinforces the need for coordination and financial resources.



65%

The full-time equivalents (FTEs) mobilised are provided by volunteers.



Food democracy at the heart of projects, their goals and resources

28

32

20

32

25

32

18

32

Collective definition of objectives

Collective drafting of the Charter of Agreement

Collective definition of contribution and remuneration terms and conditions

Citizen participation in governance bodies



Initiatives with as yet uncertain impact on the agroecological transition at territory level:

- on agricultural practices
- on the structuring of organic and local supply chains
- on dietary practices

17/32

experiments use the environmental sustainability of the products offered as a criteria for selecting products or businesses (organic certification, sustainable fishing, eco-label or equivalent)

15/21 & 11/21

experiments have established agreements with producer selling points and farm sales respectively (21/32 funds have started the agreement)

The human and financial resources required are significant, and experiments are dependent on external funding.



63%

of the budget comes from external funding (35% public, 28% private) (17/32 funds)

37%

self-financing, mainly through voluntary contributions

The role of local authorities is strengthening

★ 10/32

funds have incorporated a Territorial Food Project into their governance

★ 9/32

funds are partly funded by a Territorial Food Project

★ 4/32

funds are provided directly by local authorities

Monitoring and evaluation

Of the 29 funds that provided information about their monitoring and evaluation systems :

26

have established a monitoring and/or evaluation system

17

have established indicators

15

have a dedicated budget

15

are related to research





Assessment and Reflections: Four Key Takeaways from the Study



#1

A proliferation of experiments inspired by the Food Social Security since 2021, highlighting the need to strengthen capitalization and mutualization

Since 2021, the landscape of territorial experiments inspired by the Food Social Security (FSS) has expanded significantly, with at least 105 initiatives identified to date, including 60 food funds on which this study has chosen to focus. Although still recent, this movement experienced a notable acceleration in 2024, reflecting growing interest in these innovative models aimed at providing universal or near-universal access to healthy, sustainable food under democratic governance.

These initiatives display highly diverse profiles: varying in size from 50 to 500 participants (individuals or households); a balanced distribution between urban and rural areas, with a strong presence in territories affected by food insecurity as well as in mixed areas. They are supported by a wide range of organizational structures, including citizen-led associations, local authorities, and agricultural or social organizations.

However, many smaller experiments remain relatively invisible, lack resources, or have limited institutional support, particularly due to their recent launch. It is therefore essential to continue regularly updating the mapping of food funds and related initiatives while enriching the database with key information to facilitate networking and mutualization. Strengthening collective capitalization mechanisms and funding connections between actors would help valorize lessons learned and optimize collective learning-conditions necessary to sustainably structure this rapidly expanding dynamic, without imposing a fixed vision of what a local food fund should be.

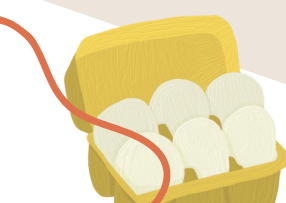
#2

Co-constructed objectives for food funds, diversified across contexts, to be clarified in alignment with available resources and funders' expectations

Local food fund experiments reflect a wide diversity of objectives, co-constructed according to territorial characteristics, engaged partners, beneficiary profiles, and intended timelines. While a national Food Social Security represents a strong political horizon for some initiatives, not all food funds are integrated into the national FSS Collective or aligned with the same political dynamic.

This diversity raises important questions regarding the coherence between stated ambitions and the resources mobilized. During the experimental phase, many initiatives prioritize long-term objectives, particularly citizen engagement, local democratic governance, and changes in individual practices. These ambitions must, however, be put into perspective, as building food democracy requires time, whereas the resources and durations of current experiments remain limited and do not always allow such objectives to be fully achieved. Moreover, the current scale of initiatives does not yet make it possible to demonstrate, in the short term, the potential impacts of a national FSS on agroecological and food system transitions, such as the structuring of sustainable agricultural supply chains or transformations in dietary practices. Beyond their limited scale and recent emergence, these experiments operate within a broader social, economic and political system that itself requires deeper transformation (Webb et al., 2020).

Clarifying medium- and long-term objectives, developing appropriate monitoring indicators, and fostering shared reflection on expected systemic impacts should guide funding decisions. Finally, complementarity between different instruments and public policies - both national and local, such as Territorial Food Projects - should be encouraged, alongside a diversity of partners, in order to maximize scaling effects and local relevance.



#3

Experiments that acknowledge their reliance on external funding while exploring hybrid models: the need to secure human and operational resources over time

The implementation of food funds and related initiatives requires significant human investment, particularly for community outreach and support, participatory governance, and multi-actor coordination. Much of this "fine-grained work" still relies heavily on volunteer engagement, raising important questions about the long-term sustainability of these projects.



Positions related to project engineering, human resources, and coordination functions are often the most difficult to finance, particularly as voluntary contributions - an element that plays a more or less central role in the socio-economic models of these experiments - do not guarantee financial balance. In addition, a constrained public budget context, combined with the multiplication of projects leading to a dilution of available funding, further weakens the stability of these initiatives.

To address these challenges, it is essential to support experiments over the long term, notably through the establishment of multi-year funding agreements. Such arrangements would help reduce the time devoted to the continuous search for funding and ensure the stable implementation of action plans. In this regard, local authorities have a key role to play in securing financial resources and ensuring the coherence and cross-sectoral alignment of public policies and territorial projects, particularly within the framework of Territorial Food Projects.

At the same time, it is crucial to fund studies and pilot initiatives exploring hybrid economic models. These could include partnerships with private companies, tax incentive mechanisms, voluntary employer contributions, or the valuation of positive externalities, taking into account the hidden costs associated with current food systems.

#4

Highly heterogeneous monitoring and evaluation frameworks still under construction, calling for greater mutualization and clearer, realistic objectives

Monitoring and evaluation are essential levers for measuring progress, adjusting strategies, and demonstrating the impact of initiatives. However, the human and financial resources dedicated to these processes vary significantly from one project to another, resulting in practices that are sometimes insufficiently systematic or rigorous. Initial feedback shows that partnerships with **specialized organizations** can play a decisive role in structuring and strengthening evaluation processes.

From a mutualization perspective, the Intercaisses project, launched in 2024 and co-led by VRAC France and the CIVAM Network, provides a particularly inspiring example of collective capitalization. It currently brings together thirteen local food fund initiatives to develop a shared toolbox derived from pioneering projects and to transfer these learnings to local authorities, associations, and citizen collectives interested in implementing similar approaches.

Nevertheless, it remains essential to define monitoring and evaluation objectives that are proportionate to available resources, in order to avoid unrealistic expectations that could place excessive pressure on field teams. Such structuring is crucial to support the progressive maturation of initiatives, improve the quality of collected data, and provide funders with reliable information to guide their support and inform medium- and long-term strategic decisions.

Delivrables

The deliverables of this study are structured around four complementary components

- The first is a **report** providing an initial overview of ongoing local experiments inspired by the Food Social Security, accompanied by a **four-page summary** presenting the main findings.
- The second is a **methodological guide** offering tools and inspiring feedback to support project monitoring and evaluation practices.
- The third component includes **two structuring datasets**, primarily intended for funders and available upon request: a descriptive overview listing the experiments and their key characteristics, and an analytical framework enabling comparison across different criteria.
- Finally, an **interactive mapping tool** allows users to visualize all identified experiments, apply filters based on several variables, and access detailed information on each initiative.

