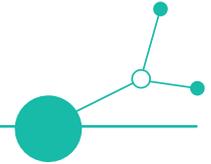


D3.1.3 Regional Action Plans for AFNs support in participating regions



Working Document

12 2024





Food4CE

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AUTHORING, REVISION & QA INFORMATION

Deliverable Contributors			
Type of author	Name and surname	Organisation (short name as in AF)	
Main author	Maršenka Marksel	UM	
Contributor	Danijela Kocuvan	RRAPM	
Contributor	Metka Dernovšek	UM	
Deliverable revision			
Version	Date	Changes	Author (Organization)
0	30.5.2025	Elaboration of chapters 1. to 3.2	Metka Dernovšek (UM)
1.0	15.10.2025	Elaboration of chapters 3.3. an 3.4. and 4	Maršenka Marksel (UM), Danijela Kocuvan (RRAPM)
2.0	4.1.2025	Revision and reaccommodation's for AP	Horváth-Mezőfi Zsuzsanna (MATE)

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www.interreg-central.eu/food4ce/



1. The Food4CE Project in a nutshell

Food4CE is a European project funded by the INTERREG Central Europe Programme, aimed at supporting Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in their efforts to create sustainable and resilient food supply systems. AFNs are essential for promoting short food supply chains and reducing the carbon footprint of food distribution. However, they face challenges such as lack of knowledge on logistics collaboration, digitalisation and distribution/delivery systems, which are exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food4CE seeks to address these challenges by establishing 5 local and 1 Transnational Innovation Hub (IH), bringing together actors from different sectors including researchers, business experts, food producers, logistic and transport operators, and policy makers. These hubs will focus on advancing AFNs logistics efficiency through the development of innovative tools and solutions.

Two innovative tools are being jointly developed within the project: the Knowledge Transfer Platform and the Matchmaking Platform. The former is intended for sharing logistics best practices and solutions, while the latter is intended for creating new B2B and B2C logistics solutions and services. The aim is to facilitate knowledge transfer and exchange between different regions and actors, and to create a unique mutual support network for AFNs in Central Europe.

Food4CE will also provide jointly developed regional action plans for each participating region and transnational (CE) policy guidelines for AFN support. The project aims to establish a sustainable and lasting AFN support mechanism, which will continue working even after the project end. This will be achieved through the integration of the Transnational Innovation Hub into the existing European Network of Logistics competence centres.

Food4CE is a vital initiative that seeks to support AFNs in their efforts to create sustainable and resilient food supply systems. By establishing local and transnational Innovation Hubs and developing innovative tools and solutions, the project aims to facilitate knowledge exchange and cooperation between different actors and regions, leading to a sustainable and lasting AFN support mechanism.



2. Purpose of the document

The purpose of the regional action plan, titled “D.3.1.3 Regional Action Plans for AFNs Support in Participating Regions,” is to outline concrete strategies and steps for enhancing Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) within each participating Central European region. Each regional action plan serves as a targeted roadmap for implementing specific activities and interventions that respond to the unique needs, challenges, and opportunities identified in that region. The objectives of the deliverable include defining clear policy recommendations, proposing actionable measures, and identifying key stakeholders necessary for effective implementation.

These plans aim to ensure that Innovation Hub activities are translated into region-specific actions that promote sustainable, resilient, and inclusive local food systems. Through detailed tasks, timelines, and milestones, the action plans will foster stakeholder collaboration, increase support for AFNs, and facilitate tangible policy and systemic changes to strengthen local and regional food systems.

3. General Information

3.1. Overview of the Region

Slovenia is a small but strategically located Central European country known for its diverse geography, stable economy, and integration into European and global structures. As a member of the European Union, the eurozone, and the Schengen Area, Slovenia enjoys high levels of trade, innovation, and political stability. Situated at the crossroads of Central and Southeastern Europe, Slovenia serves as an important junction between the Alps, the Mediterranean, the Pannonian Plain, and the Balkans. With a population of just over 2 million and a land area of 20,273 km², Slovenia is among the smallest EU member states, but it consistently ranks high in quality-of-life indices and environmental sustainability.

Geography and Environment

Slovenia shares borders with Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia, and has a short coastline along the Adriatic Sea. Its geography is characterized by Alpine mountains in the northwest, a karst plateau in the southwest, and fertile plains in the east. Forests cover over 58% of the land, making it one of Europe’s most forested countries (SORS, 2020).

Slovenia has 12 statistical regions, which are subdivided into two macroregions for the purpose of the Regional policy of the EU (NUTS-2) (Slovenia Business, 2025):

- Eastern Slovenia (Vzhodna Slovenija), which groups the Pomurska, Podravska, Koroška (Carinthia), Savinjska, Zasavska, Spodnje posavska, Jugovzhodna, and Notranjsko-kraška statistical regions.
- Western Slovenia (Zahodna Slovenija), which groups the Osrednjeslovenska, Gorenjska (Carniola), Goriška (Gorizia), and Obalno-kraška statistical regions.



Figure 1. Regional layout of Slovenia, 2025.

Slovenia is widely recognized for its strong environmental policies and sustainability performance. The capital, Ljubljana, was named European Green Capital in 2016 for its achievements in green mobility, waste management, and sustainable urban planning (European Commission, 2014). In 2022, 25.1% of Slovenia's gross final energy consumption came from renewable sources, as reported by Eurostat (SORS, 2024). The country also ranks among the EU's top performers in recycling, with a municipal waste recycling rate of 63% in 2022 (EEA, 2024) and a plastic packaging recycling rate of 51% (Eurostat, 2024). According to the European Environment Agency, Slovenia is making steady progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in clean energy, climate action, and access to water, though further improvements are needed in areas like land use and sustainable consumption (EEA, 2020).

Agriculture

Farmed agricultural area constitutes 30.6% of Slovenia's total area, with 4.8% of farming dedicated to organic production, with another 5.4% in the system of control of organic production. In 2023, Slovenia had 50,531 agricultural holdings, representing a 7% decrease from 2020, when there were 54,599 holdings. Compared to 2020, the number of holdings with 20 hectares or more of utilised agricultural land increased by 13% (MECE, 2025).

Permanent grasslands and pastures accounted for the largest share of utilised agricultural land (56%), followed by arable land (38%) and permanent crops (6%). The total area of utilised agricultural land increased by more than 2% compared to 2020. According to the new methodology in effect since 2023, the average agricultural holding in Slovenia covers 8.8 hectares, including 5 hectares of permanent grassland and pastures, 3.4 hectares of arable land, and 0.5 hectares of permanent crops (MECE, 2025).

In 2023, the majority of agricultural holdings raised poultry, followed by those rearing cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats. Leading agricultural crops include wheat, corn (maize), sugar beets, barley, potatoes, apples, and pears, with most farms still family-owned (Brittanica, 2025).

In 2023, gross value added in agriculture accounted for 0.9% of GDP, slightly higher than in 2021. The sector employed 71,205 people, 2% fewer than in 2022 and lower than in 2021. As in previous years, most workers were self-employed (66,800) (MECE, 2025).

In 2023, the value of agricultural production totalled EUR 1.581 billion, 1% lower than in 2022 but higher than in 2021, when it amounted to EUR 1.319 billion. The decline was driven by lower prices. According to



estimates, the value of crop production in 2023 was EUR 811 million, a 3% decrease from the previous year. While crop prices were lower, production volumes increased. The most significant declines in crop production value were recorded for cereals and fruit – due to lower prices in the case of cereals and lower production volumes for fruit. In contrast, the value of livestock production increased by 1% compared to 2022, reaching EUR 732 million. This increase was driven by higher prices, despite a decline in production volume (MECE, 2025).

Organic farming is most common in hilly and less intensive regions such as the Karst and Koroška. While Slovenia remains partially food self-sufficient, the sector is becoming more sustainable and regionally diversified.

Forestry also represents a significant part of the economy: 58% of Slovenia's land is forested, annually contributing EUR 250 million to the economy in production value (Slovenia Business, 2025a).

Services

The services sector remains the key part of the Slovenian economy, showing a strong growth pattern over the last ten years, especially in the information and communications technologies (ICT), financial and commercial services, and retail businesses. The tourism sector has also been very dynamic, experiencing a period of accelerated growth prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (6.2 million tourists in 2019, up 5% YOY) (Slovenia Business, 2025a).

Transport

In Slovenia, the strong growth of freight transport has been driven by the country's geographical location and open economy and has been further stimulated in recent years by high levels of international trade. This growth is also a result of Slovenia's strategic position at the intersection of the V and X European transport corridors, where both domestic and international freight transport have expanded significantly following the last two EU enlargements. Furthermore, Slovenia's accession to the EU eliminated many administrative barriers for Slovenian road hauliers, particularly previous restrictions on transport permits for operations across EU Member States. As a small Central European country, Slovenia has a naturally high share of international freight transport and a lower proportion of domestic freight movements. The Port of Koper also plays a crucial role in generating freight transport flows within Slovenia. The rapid expansion of both road and rail freight transport continued until the 2009 economic crisis, driven by strong economic growth both domestically and internationally, particularly in Eastern Europe (MECE, 2025).

Innovation and human capital

Slovenia invests significantly in education and research. It ranks above the EU average in digital skills and innovation performance, classified as a "Moderate Innovator" by the European Innovation Scoreboard (EC, 2024).

Innovation and digitalisation are a key source of firms' competitiveness. Overall, 46% of Slovenian firms report innovation activity in 2023, similar to last year's EIBIS findings but more than the EU average (32%). Slovenian firms have also higher adoption of advanced digital technologies than EU firms (80% vs. 74%). Larger firms and those in the manufacturing sector show the highest adoption rates of digital technologies (EIB, 2025).

Demographic and social trends

Slovenia's population is just over 2.12 million (mid-2025¹). The country has a population density of 101 people per square kilometre, which ranks 106th in the world. Settlement is relatively dispersed: only about 56% of Slovenians live in cities or towns, with the remainder in smaller towns or rural areas. Most people are concentrated in the Central Slovenian statistical region, which includes the capital and largest city, Ljubljana. Ljubljana has a population of 275,000, which is the only city with a population of more than 100,000 (World Population Review, 2025).

¹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/slovenia-population/>



Food demand is concentrated in a few urban centres (Ljubljana, Maribor, etc.) while a large rural population both produces and requires fresh agricultural products. The moderate total population and mixed urban/rural pattern support regional food supply chains and local markets: a substantial share of food (especially fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat) can be sourced close to consumers, but logistics must also reach scattered villages.

In terms of labour, Slovenia classifies as a high-income economy with strong labour-market indicators. Employment rates are high and unemployment low; the registered unemployment rate was only about 5.4% in late 2022 (far below the EU average). Reported average net monthly wages are around €1,800 (as of 2024), reflecting GDP per capita near the EU mean (EC, 2025).

Educational attainment is also high: roughly 40% of Slovenians aged 25-64 hold a tertiary degree (and about 91% have at least upper secondary education) (OECD, 2023). These socio-economic conditions translate into relatively strong purchasing power and consumer awareness. Hence, Slovene consumers can afford higher-quality foods and often seek out healthy, organic or specialty products. The combination of high income and education tends to boost demand for sustainable and local food, benefiting alternative food networks.

Social cohesion is also relatively strong, aided by low levels of income inequality (Gini coefficient: 23.1 in 2022²) and a high Human Development Index (0.926 in 2022³, ranked 22nd globally).

Food culture

Food culture in Slovenia is traditionally linked to local produce and seasonal cooking. For example, “nearly every Slovenian has at least a vegetable and herb garden” and farmers’ markets are very common. Households commonly grow their own vegetables and buy fresh meat, dairy and bread from village farms. The national cuisine blends Alpine, Pannonian and Mediterranean influences: dairy (cheese, milk), pork products (sausages), honey and local wines are culturally important. These traditions reinforce demand for home-grown and regional foods, encouraging participation in farmers’ markets, CSAs and other alternative food networks (STB, 2025).

Supply chain and distribution networks

Slovenia’s food retail sector is highly concentrated: Mercator (26%), Spar (20%), Hofer (13%) and Lidl (12%) together command over 75% of all food retail sales in the country. This oligopolistic structure diminishes producers’ bargaining power and makes economic viability especially challenging for small-scale and organic farmers, who face higher costs. In response farmers’ markets, on-farm direct sales and informal box-delivery schemes have proliferated, particularly in urban centres such as Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Izola, Piran, Koper and Kranj. However, AFNs remain unevenly distributed: while city-dwellers enjoy weekly markets and organic kiosks, rural areas continue to depend primarily on supermarket chains due to dispersed populations and lower demand for specialty products (Slovenia invest, 2024).

Sustainability and climate change

Slovenia’s climate is characterised by diversity, shaped by its geographic location, complex topography, and proximity to the sea. The country experiences three primary climate types: temperate continental in the east, subalpine in the central regions, and sub-Mediterranean in the west. This climatic diversity influences the adaptive capacity of different regions to respond to the impacts of climate change. In 2016, Slovenia adopted the Strategic Framework for Climate Change Adaptation, and adaptation is also addressed in the Long-Term Climate Strategy of Slovenia until 2050 (MECE, 2025).

Climate projections based on EURO-CORDEX models indicate that, by the end of the century, average temperatures will rise between 1.3°C and 4.1°C (MECE, 2025).

² <https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/pr/News/Index/10956>

³ <https://countryeconomy.com/hdi/slovenia>



Climate change is also expected to have a substantial impact on key economic sectors, including agriculture and forestry. Increasing drought conditions and extreme weather events threaten food production, reduce water availability, and increase economic losses. Slovenia ranks among the most climate-vulnerable EU Member States, as climate-related losses between 1980 and 2023 totalled approximately EUR 7 billion; the highest per capita loss in the EU (MECE, 2025).

In response to these risks, Slovenia is accelerating its adaptation efforts, including the development of a national adaptation strategy and regional action plans. Key priorities include improving water resource management, enhancing flood protection, strengthening the resilience of energy infrastructure, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Slovenia has also committed to scaling up financing for adaptation measures. In 2023, EUR 19 million from the Climate Change Fund was allocated to adaptation measures. In addition, the government adopted a five-year recovery programme, valued at EUR 2.33 billion, for the reconstruction of infrastructure damaged by the 2023 floods (MECE, 2025).

Despite the measures already adopted, key challenges remain: a shortage of specialised personnel, limited financial resources, and the need to strengthen strategic planning at all levels of governance. To enhance climate resilience, Slovenia must improve institutional capacity, upgrade climate data monitoring systems, and foster greater policy coherence and integration between sectoral policies and adaptation measures (MECE, 2025).

3.2. Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders were defined in the initial period of the project. A comprehensive list of relevant stakeholders was prepared and categorized based on their interest in the project and their decision-making power. This systematic approach ensured that all key groups were identified and involved appropriately. The identified stakeholders included AFN members, local producers, institutions (such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; the Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences; the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (KGZS) - Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Maribor; and other Slovenian chambers), local action groups from Slovenia, customers, community organizations (such as the Slovenian Rural Development Association), and intermediaries - logistic providers (including Post of Slovenia, Krapše d.o.o., and others).

Each of these stakeholders is acknowledged as playing a unique and essential role in the functioning and success of the AFN. Their knowledge and experience contribute to advance the AFN, with research results and best practices presented to support knowledge transfer and the co-creation of innovative solutions. The role of stakeholders can differ from one situation to another, especially for different contents, addressed within IH activities. Their role is also expected to differ in the future operation of IH.

Table 1. Stakeholder matrix for IH ORbITaLA

Stakeholder [organisation]	Power/Interest (e.g. low/high)	Involvement in IH (co-creation session, interview, KTP and MP platform verification etc.)
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Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food	High power and interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session to provide insights into existing political frameworks and collaboratively identify opportunities for policy improvement. AB member.
Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (KGZS), Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Maribor	High power and interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session to provide insights into the practical implementation of policies and explore opportunities to develop appropriate training and education workshops for farmers on logistics solutions. AB member.
University of Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session provide expertise on logistics solutions and, based on the specific needs of AFNs, apply knowledge and experience to identify and address their challenges effectively, also through development of KTP and MP. AB member.
University of Maribor, Faculty of agriculture and Life Sciences	Low power and high interest	AB member. Involvement in workshops and co-creation session.
Post of Slovenia	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session providing logistics solutions for efficiently delivering food products through their networks, while collaboratively with AFNs identify new opportunities for enhancing food distribution. Additional, involvement in KTP and MP creation and verification. AB member.
Krapše d.o.o	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session providing logistics experience and possible logistics solutions to AFNs while also identifying new collaboration opportunities. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP creation and verification. AB member.
Gajbica	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session sharing their experience with route optimisation and digitalisation of their logistic process while identify new opportunities for collaboration with other logistic providers and AFNs. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
Zelena Japka	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session providing experience in sustainable packaging and community engagement. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
Jeej	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session providing experience in reusable packaging, transparency and traceability. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
KZ Rače	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session providing experience in efficient logistic systems, sustainable farming practices and creating a network of smaller agricultural stakeholders. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
Zadruga Dobrina	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session providing experience in establishing a strong network of local suppliers, digitalising logistic processes and



		optimising logistic routes. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification. AB member.
Oljarna Kocbek	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session sharing experience in engaging external logistics providers for the delivery of food products, while also offering sustainable, eco-friendly packaging solutions tailored to customer needs. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
Farm Kukenberger	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session sharing experience in supporting local food producers with products sensitive to temperature requirements. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
Farm Žitnik	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session sharing experience in managing own deliveries, optimising delivery routes and eco-friendly packaging. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
Hecl Farm	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session sharing experience with on-site processing facility, traceability of raw materials and providing cold chain supply logistics. Additionally, involvement in KTP and MP co-creation and verification.
OmniOpti	Low power and high interest	Involvement in workshops and co-creation session sharing expertise and practical IT solutions for route optimisation and digitalisation of logistics processes across the entire supply chain.

3.3. Innovation Hub overview

Preparatory Activities

The SFSC and food self-sufficiency is an important objective in several strategic documents in Slovenia, on regional as well as on national level. To prepare for the IH setup, in May 2024 a webinar was held on Developing Short Supply Chains - Challenges and opportunities in Logistics. The event was well attended by different stakeholders, including AFNs, institutions (University, Ministry, Chamber of Agriculture), large consumers etc. During the project several events for/with AFNs participation were executed, as well as other project activities (like review of best practices solutions, research regarding AFNs characteristics and needs), which resulted in closer understanding of their needs. Alongside the database of stakeholders as well as media data base was updated to support the operation of IH. The future members of Advisory Board were selected and motivated to actively participate.

Location and operation

The launch of IH ORbITaLA for the purposes of SFSC was carried out on 14th of November 2024.

Location	Operating hours	Contact person	Contact details (email, phone, social media)
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<p>Regional Development Agency, Pobreška cesta 20, Maribor, Slovenia</p>	<p>On-line: every day Physically: Wednesday: 8.00 - 13.00</p>	<p>Danijela Kocuvan</p>	<p>E-mail: danijela.kocuvan@rra-podravje.si Phone: 00386 41 630 678</p>
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Operation of IH is supervised by Advisory Board, with members from key stakeholders:

Advisory Board Members	Contacts
<p>Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transport Engineering and Architecture Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (KGZS) - Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Maribor Cooperative Dobrina Post of Slovenia Krapše d.o.o.</p>	<p>Danijela Kocuvan Tomislav Letnik, Maršenka Marksel Tadeja Kvas Majer Andreja Borec Irena Leonida Kropf Milojka Fekonja Alen Kahvedžić Nada Krapše</p>

Objectives

IH ORBITaLA follows the common objectives of Food4CE: knowledge transfer, co-creation of innovation and development of short supply chains. According to the collected interest, the workshops will be adjusted to their need alongside with the content provided in Knowledge transfer platform in form of best practice description and identification of relevant logistics solutions in section of Wiki base knowledge. The Regional Hub in Slovenia has defined its vision and objectives, which represent a powerful communication tool to reach out to stakeholders and end-users.

Vision	Specific objectives
<p>To become the leading training and advisory center for AFNs in Slovenia in a specific field of activity. This will be achieved through a personalized approach and experts from different fields, who will monitor and support the progress of AFN at different stages of its development.</p>	<p>Provide a real-world environment for stakeholders to collaborate, test, and co-create innovative logistics and other solutions that will contribute to the development and upgrading of the AFNs.</p>

Within IH we managed to organize two very well attended and meaningful sessions. All the activities carried out within ORBITaLA are tailored to the identified needs of AFNs and other stakeholders. It is also important to consider the considerable diversity of food suppliers, with smaller local producers being particularly vulnerable. To ensure the successful operation of IH, it will remain essential to address the needs of the local environment. Support activities for AFNs must continue, based on their current needs and the direction in which they wish to develop. It will be crucial to encourage connections both among



food producers and consumers. In this process, IH can provide support in identifying various development solutions for the functioning of short supply chains.

3.4. Identification and prioritisation of regional needs

The Innovation Hub ORBITaLA adopted a multi-stakeholder approach to identify and prioritise regional needs. Since spring 2024, the IH has engaged alternative food networks (AFNs), logistics providers, public institutions (such as schools and kindergartens), and local producers through surveys, interviews, workshops, and meetings. A webinar in May 2024, titled “Developing Short Supply Chains - Challenges and Opportunities in Logistics”, brought together AFN members, food suppliers, academics, development agencies, and institutional food-service representatives. In-depth interviews with AFN leaders further explored current practices and logistical challenges.

Key topics were refined through Advisory Board meetings (October 2024) and co-creation sessions (January 2025), where transport, storage, packaging, and IT support were jointly prioritised. The official opening of the IH in November 2024 and the Regional Stakeholder Meeting on 7 April 2025 enabled direct exchange between public buyers and producers. Throughout this process, the IH was managed by the Regional Development Agency Podravje-Maribor, which maintained an onsite and online presence and convened an Advisory Board including representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, universities, cooperatives, and logistics companies.

Based on stakeholder input, seven thematic areas of need have been defined and prioritised:

- **Logistics infrastructure:** Cold storage and transport capacity were identified as top priorities. The absence of refrigerated facilities and specialised vehicles poses a significant challenge for producers. Shared infrastructure, such as communal cold storage hubs, refrigerated vans, and secure 24/7 pick-up points, was proposed to maintain freshness and minimise food waste. Investment in physical infrastructure (warehouses, vehicles, handling equipment) is necessary to strengthen AFN supply chains.
- **Coordination and partnerships:** Better alignment between supply and demand is essential. Public institutions should be able to source from cooperatives to ensure adequate product volumes and diversity. Nevertheless, collaboration among producers could improve fulfilment of larger orders. Through IH activities, matchmaking events, networking platforms, and dedicated coordinators were identified as key mechanisms to bridge existing gaps and reinforce links between AFNs, logistics providers, and public buyers.
- **Administrative support and simplified procedures:** Complex procurement, invoicing, and compliance processes hinder local sourcing. Rigid tender frameworks and cumbersome administrative tasks, such as e-invoicing, were noted as significant obstacles. Streamlining procedures and providing advisory support are necessary steps to reduce these administrative burdens.
- **Digital tools and IT systems:** Digitalisation is needed across AFN logistics and sales. Tools, such as online order platforms, traceability systems (e.g. QR codes), and shared databases could ease AFN business operations and broaden their market presence. The development and adoption of such systems, along with user training, would enhance efficiency, coordination, and transparency.
- **Packaging and handling:** The use of appropriate, sustainable packaging was recognised as essential. Producers already use returnable crates and optimised packaging, while buyers noted that heavy or oversized packages should be avoided. Future investments should focus on reusable systems, supported by clear guidelines and targeted training.
- **Education and training:** Gaps in knowledge exist across the supply chain. Training is needed for producers (e.g. in logistics and digital tools) and for institutional buyers (e.g. in local procurement practices). Consumer education—including among children—was also identified as a priority. Stakeholders called for



hands-on workshops in areas such as cold-chain management, cooperative business models, and regulatory compliance. Targeted education and training are necessary to complement infrastructure investments.

- **Public procurement and institutional demand:** Existing procurement rules are a significant barrier for small and seasonal producers. Public tender frameworks often exclude AFNs due to rigid structures and volume requirements. Suggested solutions include setting quotas for local products (e.g. the existing 20% in kindergartens), creating smaller contract lots, and simplifying rules for cooperative bids. Without such reforms, new infrastructure and networks risk being underutilised. Therefore, modernising procurement regulations is viewed as a key condition for unlocking the potential of AFNs in the Podravje region and beyond.

Collectively, these themes represent the region's prioritized needs. In stakeholder rankings, improving logistics infrastructure and reforming procurement practices emerged as top concerns, while coordination, packaging, IT tools, and training were rated as important enabling measures to support the primary logistics challenges.

The prioritised needs above provide the foundation for selecting suitable policy instruments in the regional action plan. By aligning with Food4CE's objectives - which emphasize overcoming logistics and digitalisation challenges in AFNs - the action plan can target concrete measures beyond general strategies (excluding S5/MRS). For instance:

- **Infrastructure funding:** Regional and rural development funds (e.g. CAP Pillar II or local development grants) could be allocated for shared cold-storage facilities, refrigerated vehicles or aggregation centres that serve AFNs, directly addressing the noted infrastructure gaps.
- **Cooperative support programs:** Grants or advisory services could encourage producers to form cooperatives or networks, matching the coordination need. Seed funding for cooperative logistics initiatives or cooperative business planning would foster the collaborative models' stakeholders requested.
- **Procurement reforms:** Local authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture could issue guidelines or pilot programs to adjust public tender rules. For example, introducing charter clauses for local purchasing, splitting contracts into smaller lots, or training procurement officers would operationalise the procurement flexibility that stakeholders asked for.
- **Digitalisation incentives:** Innovation grants or public-private partnerships could promote development of AFN-focused IT tools (e.g. traceability systems, online ordering platforms, mobile apps). Targeted calls under national innovation funds could subsidise adoption of digital logistics solutions identified by the IH.

Packaging and environmental schemes: Environmental or agricultural grants could support transition to returnable and eco-friendly packaging. Voucher schemes or technical assistance for sustainable packaging would align with stakeholder recommendations.

Education and advisory services: Vocational training programs (possibly co-funded by agricultural extension services or EU education funds) could be designed to fill the skills gap. The IH itself could coordinate workshops and eLearning (via the KTP) on logistics, which could be further supported by existing training policies.

4. Policy Context

4.1. Existing Policy Context

National level



a. Slovenia's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Slovenia's CAP focuses on food security, sustainable production, and rural vitality, with €1.8 billion allocated (2023-2027), nearly 60% of rural development funds directed toward environmental and climate goals.

Key areas relevant to AFNs:

1. Support for small & young farmers

- Redistributive payments target smaller farms (5.9% of direct aid).
- EUR 28 million is earmarked for young farmers to ensure generational renewal and innovation.

2. Short Supply Chains & local food systems

- Sectoral interventions support fruit, vegetable, wine, and honey producers.
- Programs for collective marketing, LEADER/CLLD projects, and the 'Naša super hrana' campaign promote local food consumption.
- Direct support for cooperatives and short chain logistics, including procurement support for public institutions.

3. Agroecology & organic production

- Goal: 18% of farmland under organic cultivation by 2027.
- EUR 101 million allocated for eco-schemes and EUR 91 million for organic expansion.
- Strategic links between quality schemes and public awareness campaigns.

4. Innovation & advisory support

- AKIS system provides training for digital and sustainable agriculture.
- Strategic Research and Innovation Partnerships (SRIPs) foster smart food systems, circular economy, and logistics innovation.

b. National Strategic Documents

- Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 and Spatial Strategy 2050 promote food self-sufficiency and resource-efficient agriculture.
- The "Our Food, Rural Areas and Natural Resources" resolution supports local procurement, processing, and tourism integration.

Regional Level

a. Regional Development Programmes (e.g. Podravje 2021-2027)

- Prioritize short supply chains, job creation, and increased food self-sufficiency.
- Investment in shared logistics, irrigation, and local branding (e.g. regional food labels).
- Support for food supply in schools and public institutions through long-term procurement strategies.

More information on RDP can be found [here](#).

b. Local Action Groups (LAGs) and CLLD Initiatives

- 37 LAGs implement over 500 interdisciplinary projects across Slovenia.
- Focus areas: short chains, branding, organic production, and market revitalization.
- Pilot projects connect agriculture with education, tourism, and gastronomy.



More information on LAGs can be found [here](#).

c. **Urban Food Policy (Ljubljana MUFPP)**

- Promotes local food sourcing, community gardens, food waste reduction, and public education.
- Integrates food with urban planning and sustainability goals.

See [here](#) for more information.

EU Level

a. **European Green Deal & Farm to Fork Strategy**

- Emphasize short food chains, organic food in public procurement, and fair agri-food systems.
- Encourage Member States to adopt sustainable tendering criteria and support resilient local food economies.

b. **Horizon Europe & Food 2030**

- Support innovation and collaboration for sustainable, climate-resilient food systems.
- Fund projects on digital traceability, circular food systems, and regional food hubs.

4.2. Policy Gaps and Challenges

Despite a solid policy foundation at national and EU level underlining the importance of food supply chains, several critical gaps and challenges hinder the development of alternative food networks (AFNs) and short food supply chains in Slovenia:

1. **Logistics infrastructure deficits**

- Many small and medium producers lack access to cold storage, refrigerated vehicles, and handling equipment.
- Absence of shared infrastructure such as communal hubs or 24/7 collection points leads to inefficiencies, food waste, and limited capacity to especially to supply public institutions that require larger amounts.

2. **Fragmented coordination and weak partnerships**

- AFNs and local producers often work in isolation, resulting in insufficient volumes and irregular deliveries.
- Public buyers report difficulties in consolidating demand and sourcing diverse, regular supplies from fragmented small producers.
- Dedicated coordinators and structured platforms are lacking to manage joint orders and logistics.

3. **Administrative and regulatory barriers**

- Public procurement rules and administrative processes are rigid and resource-intensive, disadvantaging small and seasonal producers.



- Complex invoicing, e-procurement, and compliance requirements impose high transaction costs on both suppliers and buyers.
- Tendering frameworks rarely allow for small lots or cooperative bids, limiting AFN participation.

4. Digitalisation gaps

- Existing IT systems are fragmented and often unsuitable for small-scale producers.
- Lack of digital ordering platforms, traceability tools, and interoperable databases hinders efficiency and transparency.
- Limited training and adoption capacity among both producers and public institutions further slow digital transformation.

5. Packaging and handling issues

- Sustainable and ergonomic packaging systems remain underdeveloped.
- Current practices rely heavily on disposable or oversized packaging, leading to inefficiencies and environmental burdens.

6. Skills and training needs

- Producers need training in logistics management, digital tools, and regulatory compliance.
- Public buyers lack skills in lot design, seasonal menu planning, and procurement of local food.
- Consumer awareness, particularly among children, remains low, requiring systematic education campaigns.

7. Procurement constraints and institutional demand

- Without procurement reform, even well-developed logistics systems risk underuse.
- Existing quota schemes (e.g. 20% local food in kindergartens) are insufficiently enforced and difficult to expand under current legal frameworks.
- Public authorities have limited capacity to integrate sustainability and local sourcing criteria into procurement in line with EU recommendations.

These gaps demonstrate that, while Slovenia's CAP Strategic Plan and regional programmes recognise AFNs, operational barriers prevent effective implementation. Addressing these challenges is crucial to unlock AFNs' potential for sustainability, resilience, and rural development.

The action plan seeks to improve the enabling environment for AFNs by targeting specific policy instruments at national, regional level

Public Procurement Framework (Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Agriculture)

- **Targeted intervention:** issuance of guidelines and model tender documents introducing smaller lots, seasonal contracts, and rules for cooperative bids.



- **Alignment with EU objectives:** contributes to Farm to Fork targets on sustainable food procurement and supports SME participation in public markets.

Regional Development Programmes (e.g. Podravje 2021-2027)

- **Targeted intervention:** regional funds for logistics infrastructure, branding, and innovation.
- **Alignment with EU objectives:** fosters rural vitality, job creation, and regional food self-sufficiency.

Local Action Groups (LAGs) and CLLD Initiatives

- **Targeted intervention:** pilot projects for cooperative logistics, matchmaking events, and digital platforms.
- **Alignment with EU objectives:** strengthens bottom-up, community-led approaches in line with LEADER and CLLD principles.

5. Regional Policy Recommendations

5.1. Policy objectives

The overall aim of this Action Plan is to enable Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) in Slovenia to access appropriate logistics infrastructure, modernised public procurement pathways, and governance and digital tools that enhance their operational, economic, and environmental sustainability. To this end, we encourage regional and national stakeholders to align around the following policy objectives, based on the multi-stakeholder process coordinated by the Innovation Hub ORBITaLA:

- I. Upgrade cold-chain capacity and shared logistics assets to safeguard freshness, reduce waste, and improve last-mile distribution for AFNs.
- II. Modernise public procurement to align institutional demand (schools, kindergartens, etc.) with AFN supply through proportionate, SME-friendly procedures.
- III. Support research, training, digitalisation, and governance to strengthen coordination among producers, logistics providers, and public buyers.
- IV. Encourage innovation in logistics and incubate cooperative initiatives, including circular packaging systems and low-emission delivery models.

5.2. Proposed policy changes

Within each objective, several policy changes and initiatives are proposed.

I. Upgrade cold-chain and shared logistics infrastructure



The region should establish a dedicated funding window for AFN logistics infrastructure, prioritising shared cold storage hubs, refrigerated vehicles, and secure 24/7 pick-up points. Investments should extend to essential handling equipment and modular, energy-efficient refrigerated containers deployable in urban and peri-urban sites. Municipalities should be encouraged—through regional directives and incentives—to make suitable public spaces available at reduced cost (e.g., free use or subsidised rents, contributions to rental expenses, serviced locations for modular cold units). Funding schemes should allow cooperative and multi-beneficiary ownership models to ensure broad access and high utilisation. Monitoring requirements (temperature logging, energy performance) should be proportionate and standardised.

II. Modernise public procurement and institutional demand

To remove barriers facing small and seasonal producers, the region—together with the Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture—should issue model tender documents and guidance that: (a) split contracts into smaller, seasonal and geographic lots; (b) enable consortium/cooperative bids with clear documentation rules; (c) strengthen quality criteria for freshness, seasonality, traceability, and sustainable logistics (fully consistent with EU rules); and (d) expand dynamic purchasing systems/frameworks allowing suppliers to join during the year. Existing indicative targets for local/seasonal foods (e.g., in kindergartens) should be maintained or carefully extended, coupled with buyer training and supplier onboarding to ensure realistic delivery and compliance.

III. Research, training, digital tools, and governance

To support evidence-based improvements and skills development, the region should enhance AFNs' access to the research and innovation ecosystem, fostering structured collaboration among regional development agencies, universities, cooperatives, and logistics firms.

Priority should be given to applied research on cold-chain optimisation, route pooling, and cooperative business models, accompanied by scholarships and modular training for producers (logistics, digital tools, regulatory compliance) and for public buyers (lot design, seasonal menu planning, evaluation criteria). A Permanent Working Group on AFN Logistics should be established (IH ORBITaLA/RRA as secretariat) to monitor needs, translate them into targeted funding calls and procurement updates, and keep regional strategies current. Digitalisation should be advanced through interoperable ordering and traceability platforms (e.g., QR codes, shared product databases, APIs to public buyer systems), with support for adoption and user training, not only software acquisition.

IV. Initiative incubation and operational measures

The region should foster the dissemination and replication of successful AFN logistics models through peer-to-peer training, feasibility studies, and business planning, delivered via a community incubator for food co-ops and emerging AFNs. The incubator should also support cooperative start-ups for sustainable logistics (e.g., cycle logistics, pooled refrigerated transport) and run pilots of ecological micro-logistics platforms serving CSA, farmers' markets, and co-ops—with the potential to interface with public procurement. To accelerate the transition, introduce micro-investments for transport electrification (e-cargo bikes, e-vans, shared charging) and establish a returnable packaging pool with ergonomic standards, deposit/return schemes, and clear handling guidelines to avoid heavy or oversized packages. Digital tools should be cooperative, accessible, and interoperable to preserve inclusiveness and decentralised control.



6. List of actions

6.1. Action overview

The following section presents a list of concrete action plans developed in response to the identified gaps and needs within the Slovenian region. These action plans are designed to address key challenges, strengthen regional capacities, and support the implementation of sustainable and inclusive development strategies.

ACTION PLAN proposed changes	Supporting Actions
I. Upgrade cold-chain capacity and shared logistics assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action 1: Joint coordination platform• Action 2: Tailored local-food delivery system• Action 6: Producer support programme
II. Modernise public procurement and institutional demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action 3: Seasonal planning• Action 4: Matchmaking and networking• Action 5: Procurement guidelines and training
III. Research, training, digital tools, and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action 1: Joint coordination platform• Action 7: Regional coordination group• Action 8: Orbitala innovation hub
IV. Encourage innovation in logistics and incubate cooperative initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action 4: Networking• Action 6: Producer support• Action 8: Orbitala innovation hub• Action 9: Consumer awareness

6.2. Detailed action plan

Action 1: Joint Coordination Platform for the Distribution of Local Food



Description:

This measure sets up a joint coordination point—run by a cooperative, logistics coordinator, or organised food network—to manage joint ordering and delivery of local food to schools and other public institutions. Its aim is to consolidate orders, achieve critical mass, and improve transport efficiency.

Tasks and activities:

- Analyse demand and consumption of local food products.
- Analyse current public procurement practices, challenges, infrastructure and logistics capacity, IT readiness, legal constraints, and staffing in public institutions.
- Analyse existing IT systems for ordering and distributing local food.
- Establish or expand an existing local food cooperative or, alternatively, develop a digital coordination platform designed to manage joint orders.
- Train logistics coordinators and food organisers on coordination tools, order management, logistics planning, supplier communication, and public-procurement procedures.
- Formalise agreements with suppliers and institutions defining roles, schedules, quality standards, pricing, invoicing, and dispute-resolution terms.

Timeframe: 8-14 months (estimated duration)

Leads and partners:

- Lead: food cooperatives, logistics providers, local development agency, municipality, chamber of agriculture and commerce, social enterprises, or food hubs with a farm network.
- Partners: food cooperatives, schools, kindergartens, farmers.

Required resources:

- IT infrastructure: hardware, internet connectivity, and a secure digital platform for order management and communication.
- Staff for logistics coordination: a dedicated coordinator and possibly a part-time administrative assistant.
- Training materials and support for staff and food organisers.
- Facilities and equipment for logistics processes (receiving, storage, sorting, packaging, and distribution).
- Communication tools: phones, email, printed info packs for onboarding suppliers and institutions.

Funding sources:

- Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
- Local Action Groups (LAGs): project funding under rural development strategies
- Municipal budgets: operational costs, staffing, or co-financing
- EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development): rural infrastructure, local food systems, cooperatives
- Interreg: cross-border and interregional cooperation, especially digital platforms or logistics innovation
- LEADER approach: via LAGs, community-led local development
- Horizon Europe or LIFE: pilot innovations in food logistics and sustainability
- KPIs: number of institutions involved, frequency of joint orders, reduction in separate deliveries, total volume of locally produced food, and stakeholder satisfaction.



- **Monitoring** may include monthly reports, digital dashboards integrated with the ordering platform, and feedback surveys for suppliers and institutions.

Action 2: Tailored Local-Food Delivery System for Public Institutions

Description:

This measure develops a delivery system for local food tailored to the needs of public institutions such as schools and kindergartens. It addresses limited cold storage, strict delivery schedules, and the need for reliable, frequent supply while ensuring sustainability and efficiency.

A key solution is the use of refrigerated delivery containers placed near institutions, allowing early-morning or out-of-hours deliveries without staff presence. Additional measures include standardised routes, reusable packaging, and shared cold and transport capacity to reduce delivery frequency, costs, and environmental impact.

Tasks and activities:

- Design and implement a delivery model tailored to public-institution needs, including flexible scheduling, reduced delivery frequency, and efficient route planning.
- Establish a shared central cold unit/container as a hub for temporary storage and pre-distribution of perishable local foods, and to support sorting, delivery consolidation, and basic pre-processing where feasible.
- Use delivery containers that also serve as refrigerated units, enabling early-morning or out-of-hours deliveries without staff present, while maintaining food quality and hygiene standards.
- Set clear agreements with suppliers and institutions on the use of returnable and reusable packaging, including container types, responsibilities for cleaning, and return protocols.
- Develop a logistics scheme that enables multiple producers to participate in pooled transport routes, using a coordinated timetable and route optimisation for higher efficiency and lower environmental impact.

Timeframe: 14-20 months

Leads and partners:

- **Lead:** Ministry of Education, municipality
- **Partners:** schools, kindergartens, logistics providers, food suppliers, farmers

Required resources:

- Investments in cold units, including central hubs and mobile refrigerated containers
- Reusable packaging compliant with food hygiene and safety standards
- Delivery vehicles (new or shared) with temperature control where needed
- Software for route optimisation and delivery management
- Staff for coordination, delivery, and container handling
- Maintenance and operating costs for cold units
- Safety and hygiene equipment for temporary storage and food handling

Funding sources:

- Ministry of Education: operational and infrastructure costs, staffing or co-financing
- Municipal budgets: same purposes
- Local Action Groups (LAGs): project funding under rural development strategies
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.(EAFRD): rural infrastructure



KPIs: reduction of single-use packaging, delivery reliability and punctuality, satisfaction of users in public institutions, total volume delivered through shared logistics.

Action 3: Seasonal Planning of Local-Food Supply

Description:

Develop planning tools and agreements to ensure a stable, seasonally adjusted supply of core local products (vegetables, fruit, meat) for public institutions. Work with producers to anticipate demand and plan production accordingly.

Tasks and activities:

- Collect and aggregate historical consumption data from public institutions.
- Work with producers to prepare calendars of seasonal availability.
- Align public-procurement schedules with peaks in seasonal production.
- Introduce a basic pre-ordering contractual model.

Timeframe: 6-10 months

Leads: agricultural advisory services, producer cooperatives, public buyers

Required resources: data-collection tools, facilitation support, seasonal product templates

Funding sources: EAFRD, LEADER, municipal co-financing

KPIs: number of institutions using seasonal plans; reduction in off-season purchasing.

Action 4: Matchmaking and Networking Events

Description:

Organise regular “speed-dating” style events between public institutions and local producers to encourage direct communication, product showcasing, and trust-building.

Tasks and activities:

- Prepare supplier and buyer profiles.
- Hold structured matchmaking sessions.
- Collect feedback to improve future events.
- Set up a digital contact register for follow-up collaboration.

Timeframe: 3-6 months (with the option of annual repetition)

Leads: local development agency, agricultural chambers, municipalities

Required resources: venue, facilitators, communication materials

Funding sources: municipal budgets, Interreg (for cross-border events), LAG support

KPIs: number of connections established; share of new partnerships for public procurement.

Action 5: Public-Procurement Guidelines and Training for Public Institutions



Description:

Provide legal and practical guidance for incorporating local food into public-procurement procedures in compliance with applicable legislation. Strengthen the capacities of procurers and food/catering organisers in public institutions.

Tasks and activities:

- Prepare user-friendly procurement handbooks including clauses for local food.
- Organise workshops and legal clinics for schools, kindergartens, and institutions.
- Compile and disseminate sample tender documentation.
- Adjust award criteria to enable participation of local and small suppliers.
- Prepare recommendations for public institutions.
- Test flexible framework agreements.
- Introduce proportionate exceptions for local suppliers (where legally permissible).

Timeframe: 6-12 months

Leads: Ministry of Education, public-procurement experts, municipalities, legal advisers

Required resources: training materials, expert staff, workshop logistics

Funding sources: Ministry of Education, Erasmus, LIFE (for sustainability aspects), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

KPIs: number of trained institutions; inclusion of local-food criteria in tenders.

Action 6: Producer Support Programme for Participation in Joint Delivery Schemes

Description:

Enable small producers to join shared logistics through technical, organisational, and financial support. Support local producers and processors with costs for equipment, promotion, administration, and certification.

Tasks and activities:

- Assess logistics readiness and barriers among small producers.
- Co-design models to optimise delivery routes.
- Offer micro-grants for cold boxes, shared delivery vehicles, digital tools, and other equipment needed for storing and transporting local food.
- Establish mentoring between experienced and new producers.

Timeframe: 8-12 months

Leads: producer organisations, logistics consultants, Local Action Groups (LAGs)

Required resources: technical assistance, support for procuring transport equipment

Funding sources: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), regional-development programmes, LEADER

KPIs: number of producers participating in shared logistics; reduction in delivery cost per unit.

Action 7: Establishment and Operation of a Regional Coordination Group on Local Food Self-Sufficiency



Description:

Inter-institutional exchange of information and knowledge, networking for project implementation, creation of regional partnerships (e.g., joint applications to calls), and preparation of a regional strategy for food self-sufficiency.

The objective is to establish an operational working group ensuring coordinated action of regional institutions in the field of food self-sufficiency.

Tasks and activities:

- Form a working group including diverse support-ecosystem stakeholders from the Podravje region.
- Prepare a regional strategy for food self-sufficiency in Podravje.
- Hold regular meetings to agree on implementation, plan and execute concrete activities, and secure funding sources.

Timeframe: 12 months

Leads and partners:

Leads: RRA Podravje - Maribor

Partners: Agricultural and Forestry Institute Maribor, Agricultural and Forestry Institute Ptuj, Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture, University of Maribor, Local Initiative for Entrepreneurship and Employment LIPA

Required resources: staff, office equipment, and meeting space

Funding sources: Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development, municipal budgets, EU funds

Action 8: Operation of the ORBITaLA Innovation Hub

Description:

The ORBITaLA Innovation Hub is a support environment for the development of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs), providing assistance across various business areas.

Objective: To strengthen AFNs through capacity-building, advisory services, pilot projects, and knowledge exchange.

Tasks and activities:

- Prepare a work programme/activity plan.
- Organise workshops, training sessions, and meetings to raise AFN competencies.
- Provide individual advisory services based on AFN needs.
- Develop and implement pilot projects in food self-sufficiency and disseminate lessons learned (e.g., joint ordering of packaging to achieve savings).
- Identify, exchange, and support good practices.
- Develop new support programmes for AFNs.
- Establish B2B links among AFNs and with other stakeholders.

Timeframe: 12 months

Leads: RRA Podravje - Maribor

Partners: AFNs as beneficiaries and other stakeholders

Required resources: staff, office equipment and meeting space, trainers, and specialist advisers

Funding sources: Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development, municipal budgets, EU funds



Action 9: Consumer Awareness-Raising

Description:

Implement various awareness-raising activities—workshops in schools and kindergartens, general promotional campaigns, etc.

Objective:

Achieve long-term mindset shifts among end consumers, steering them towards using local food.

Tasks and activities:

- Deliver workshops in schools and kindergartens.
- Prepare lists of local shops and markets, and local suppliers.
- Develop new ways of linking AFNs with end consumers.

Timeframe: ongoing

Lead: RRA Podravje - Maribor

Partners: Agricultural and Forestry Institute Maribor, Agricultural and Forestry Institute Ptuj, Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture, University of Maribor, Local Initiative for Entrepreneurship and Employment LIPA

Required resources: staff, office equipment, and meeting space

Funding sources: Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development, municipal budgets, EU funds

6.3. Risk management

Effective risk management is essential to ensure the successful implementation of the Slovenian Regional Action Plan. The identified risks include both internal (e.g., resource shortages, stakeholder disengagement, coordination issues) and external factors (e.g., political shifts, funding fluctuations, or regulatory constraints). This section identifies potential risks, evaluates their likelihood and impact, and outlines mitigation strategies to maintain implementation momentum and ensure the resilience of the proposed measures.



Action 1: Joint Coordination Platform for the Distribution of Local Food

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Limited interest from public institutions or suppliers to join the coordination system	Medium	High	High	Start with a pilot involving motivated partners; demonstrate benefits through data (efficiency, cost savings); maintain active communication with stakeholders.
Insufficient technical capacity to develop or manage the digital platform	Low	Medium	Medium	Partner with existing IT providers or cooperatives with experience in logistics platforms; secure training for coordinators.
Legal and administrative barriers in public procurement	Medium	High	High	Involve legal experts early; align the system with procurement regulations; involve the regulators, propose model contracts and framework agreements.

Action 2: Tailored Local-Food Delivery System for Public Institutions

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
High upfront investment costs (cold units, reusable packaging, route-planning tools)	High	High	High	Implement in phases; combine national, EU, and municipal funds; explore leasing models.
Food-safety compliance challenges	Low	High	Medium	Engage food-safety authorities during design; apply existing certified standards; train logistics staff accordingly.
Disengagement of institutions due to increased coordination complexity	Medium	Medium	Medium	Maintain open feedback channels; adjust delivery models to real operational needs; demonstrate time and cost savings.

Action 3: Seasonal Planning of Local-Food Supply

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Poor data quality or lack of updated consumption information	Medium	Medium	Medium	Establish data-collection protocols; involve schools and municipalities in regular data submission.



Unpredictable seasonal variations (e.g., weather, harvest failures)	High	High	High	Build flexibility into procurement contracts; maintain a reserve list of substitute suppliers.
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Action 4: Matchmaking and Networking Events

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Low participation or short-term interest from producers or institutions	Medium	Medium	Medium	Offer hybrid (online + in-person) formats; provide follow-up communication and concrete matchmaking outcomes.
Limited long-term impact of networking	Low	Medium	Low	Establish a digital contact register; ensure periodic repetition of events (e.g., annual or biannual).

Action 5: Public-Procurement Guidelines and Training for Public Institutions

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Complex legal framework leading to cautious procurement behaviour	Medium	High	High	Provide legal templates and user-friendly guidelines; organise workshops with practical examples.
Limited engagement from procurement officers due to workload	High	High	High	Deliver short, focused training modules; involve ministry representatives for institutional endorsement.
Political or policy shifts affecting public-procurement priorities	Low	High	Medium	Promote policy alignment with EU Farm-to-Fork objectives; maintain dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Agriculture.

Action 6: Producer Support Programme for Participation in Joint Delivery Schemes

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Limited financial capacity of small food producers	High	High	High	Provide micro-grants and flexible co-financing; connect with existing EAFRD and LEADER schemes.



Logistical and technical challenges (lack of cold storage, vehicles)	High	High	High	Offer shared-use logistics solutions; promote collective ownership models.
Unequal participation across producers	Medium	Medium	Medium	Facilitate mentoring and technical assistance to ensure inclusion of smaller or remote producers.

Action 7: Establishment and Operation of a Regional Coordination Group on Local Food Self-Sufficiency

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Declining engagement and irregular participation in coordination activities	Medium	Medium	Medium	Rotate leadership roles; provide clear agendas and tangible outcomes for each meeting.
Lack of political or financial support for regional strategy	Medium	High	High	Ensure early involvement of regional authorities; align objectives with national food-security and circular-economy strategies.

Action 8: Operation of the ORbITaLA Innovation Hub

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Limited engagement of AFNs or support organisations	Medium	Medium	Medium	Develop tailored communication; highlight direct benefits (training, visibility, funding).
Resource shortages for staff or expert support	Medium	High	High	Diversify funding sources (EU programmes, regional funds); ensure co-financing commitments.

Action 9: Consumer Awareness-Raising

Risk	Probability	Impact	Priority	Mitigation Strategy
Limited audience reach or short-term impact of campaigns	Medium	Medium	Medium	Combine awareness activities with local food events; engage media and influencers; integrate campaigns in schools.



Insufficient long-term funding for awareness programmes	High	High	High	Include awareness-raising as an eligible activity in municipal and EU-funded projects; involve private sponsors.
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6.4. Stakeholder engagement

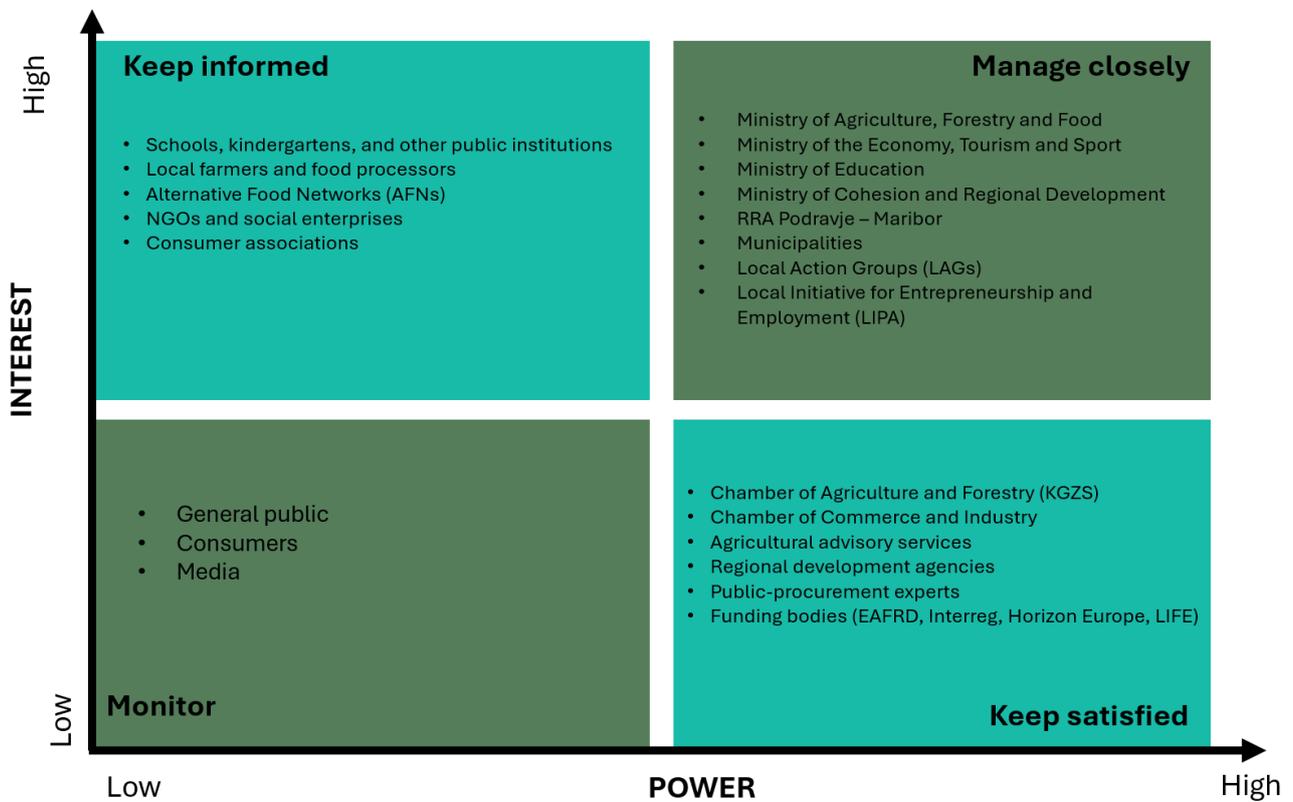
Active involvement of stakeholders is essential for the successful implementation of the Slovenian Regional Action Plan. The following engagement strategy outlines how clear communication, broad participation, and long-term commitment will be ensured throughout the implementation process. It builds on the stakeholder analysis and applies a targeted approach, distinguishing between groups according to their level of influence, responsibility, and interest in the plan.

Stakeholders in the “**Manage closely**” group are those directly shaping or implementing the plan and are therefore involved in decision-making, coordination, and monitoring activities. In this group we also involve stakeholders which may have less formal power than ministers on national level but they have strong on operational and regional involvement. “**Keep satisfied**” stakeholders hold significant influence and resources but are less involved in daily implementation; they are consulted regularly to maintain their support and alignment. “**Keep informed**” stakeholders include operational actors and beneficiaries whose feedback and participation are important for ensuring the plan’s success. Finally, “**Monitor**” stakeholders represent the wider public and potential partners whose engagement will be observed and encouraged as interest grows.

	Stakeholders	Engagement approach	Key actions
Manage closely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ministry of Education; – Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food – Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport – RRA Podravje – Maribor municipalities; – Local Action Groups (LAGs); – Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development 	<p>Active, continuous involvement in strategic and operational decisions. Ensure that their feedback shapes the implementation of key actions and risk management responses.</p>	<p>Regular coordination meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participation in decision-making and pilot design – – Shared project and reporting templates – Co-leadership in implementation of selected actions



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local Initiative for Entrepreneurship and Employment LIPA – producer cooperatives; – logistics coordinators 		
Keep satisfied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Chambers of Agriculture and Commerce; – agricultural advisory services (Agricultural and Forestry Institute Maribor, Agricultural and Forestry Institute Ptuj) – regional development agencies; – innovation hubs; – public-procurement experts; – Reserach institutions: University of Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Transportation Engineering and Architecture, University of Maribor – funding authorities (EAFRD, Interreg, Horizon Europe); 	<p>Maintain engagement and satisfaction through regular information sharing and consultation on policy alignment and funding mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Annual strategic briefings – Targeted policy consultations – Thematic workshops and progress summaries
Keep informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – schools, – kindergartens, – catering managers, – AFNs, NGOs, – social enterprises, – local farmers, and – food suppliers 	<p>Provide regular updates and collect feedback on implementation progress, operational improvements, and results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Biannual online updates – Short feedback surveys – Participation in training and awareness events
Monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – General public, – media, – consumer groups 	<p>Observe engagement trends and adjust communication if interest increases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public information campaigns – Media releases and social media updates – Community outreach during awareness-raising events





7. Conclusion

This Regional Action Plan for Slovenia brings together what was learned through the ORBITaLA Innovation Hub and Food4CE project activities and turns it into concrete steps to strengthen Alternative Food Networks. It focuses on the issues stakeholders raised most often: better cold-chain and shared logistics, clearer and more workable public procurement, stronger coordination, and practical support for digital tools, packaging and skills.

The actions are designed to work as a whole. The first set tackles supply-demand alignment and seasonality (a joint coordination platform, a tailored delivery system, and seasonal planning). The next set builds connections and capability (matchmaking, procurement guidance and training, and support for producers to join shared logistics). The final set reinforces governance and uptake (a regional coordination group, the ORBITaLA hub, and consumer awareness). The aim is simple: fewer fragmented deliveries and less waste, more local food reaching schools and kindergartens, and logistics that is efficient, transparent and has lower environmental impact.

Delivery of local food products rests on a clear engagement model and a pragmatic view of risk. Ministries and municipalities set direction and create room to act; RRA Podravje - Maribor, LAGs and regional partners keep the work moving; cooperatives, logistics coordinators, producers and public buyers make the changes on the ground; universities and advisory services support with know-how and monitoring. Funding, compliance and commitment are managed through phased roll-outs, early legal input, financing (EAFRD, Interreg, Horizon Europe) and steady communication.

Finally, the plan sets out measurable outputs and learning loops. Common KPIs (institutional participation, volumes of local food, delivery reliability and consolidation, training uptake, and satisfaction) will be tracked through dashboards and periodic reviews. The Permanent coordination under Action 7 and the ORBITaLA hub (Action 8) will capture lessons from pilots and feed them back into procurement practice, logistics design, and capacity-building. In sum, this action plan provides a practical, scalable route for Slovenia to expand short food supply chains, improve public access to local food, and enhance the resilience and sustainability of its regional food system.

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