



# The European Book of Food Literacy

A comprehensive audit report on programs and best practices in the European Union

July 2025



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# Foreword

Across Europe, people increasingly recognise the importance of our relationship with food. Yet food literacy remains overlooked and misunderstood.

The report, **Towards a Shared Understand of Food Literacy Report (2025)**, drew attention to this gap. It found that while many programmes strengthen people’s knowledge, skills, and confidence around food, few explicitly identify their work as “food literacy”. Without a common language, it is difficult to connect these efforts or build a coherent picture of what food literacy looks like in practice.

The European Book of Food Literacy builds on that earlier work, offering an overview of the current European food literacy landscape. Commissioned by EIT Food, the report provides a clearer picture of where activity is concentrated, where gaps remain, and how existing efforts might better connect. By visualising the breadth and diversity of programmes and initiatives, the report seeks to inspire collective action and highlight opportunities for collaboration. It can also support policy and funding discussions around the future of food literacy in Europe.

Importantly, this document is intended as a snapshot in time. The food literacy landscape continues to evolve as new programmes emerge, priorities shift, and understandings deepen. As such, this report should not be read as exhaustive or definitive, but as a living reference that captures where we stand today – and prompts reflection on where we might go next.

We hope this report helps to strengthen shared understanding and spark new connections across the community of people building food literacy in Europe. By recognising what already exists and what is missing, we can move towards a more inclusive, efficient, and effective approach to empowering people through food.

**Penny Kidd and Fabienne Ruault**

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*November 2025 update: EIT Food will no longer continue funding food literacy activities from 2026 onwards. As a result, we hope other actors in the food system are able to apply the findings and recommendations outlined in this report.*

**The European Book of Food Literacy was prepared by Neture Impact – a VML Company**

# Executive Summary

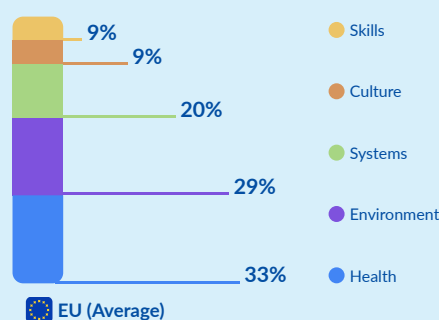


# 1. Executive Summary

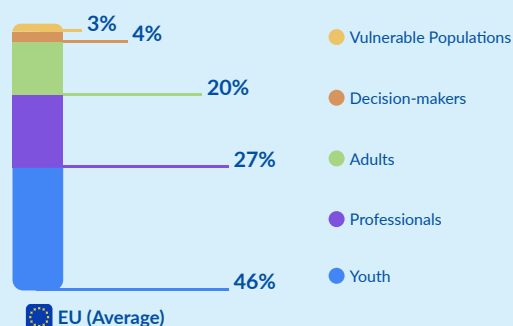
This research aims to examine in detail the state of Food Literacy across the European Union, segmenting specific programs and interventions into individual initiatives in order to be able to comprehensively compare the scope and breadth of their work, enabling the reader to extract relevant insights and identify possible gaps that hinder progress. The findings shared here highlight opportunities to strengthen existing efforts and promote more healthy, sustainable, and inclusive food systems throughout the European Union.

The research identified over **430 programs** and **880 initiatives** across the **27 EU member** states, showcasing a diverse and comprehensive food literacy landscape.

The main initiative **focus areas** identified were general health (33%) and environmental topics (29%). Other areas, such as systemic food themes (20%), food-related social culture and traditions (9%), and cooking skills (9%), rounded out the rest of the common initiatives.



Youth populations were identified as the primary **target audience** (46% of total initiatives), in particular school aged children, aged 6–12 years. Other relevant groups targeted were professionals, such as educators, catering staff, and industry workers (27%), followed by adult populations (20%). Vulnerable populations and decision-makers received the least attention, representing only 3% and 4% of initiatives, respectively.



**Two main types** of entities were the most common during the landscape analysis: governmental institutions such as national health associations or agriculture / food related ministries, and more grassroots level NGOs or organizations which work from the bottom up. Both models show effectiveness within their specific contexts, although research shows grassroots programs often **struggle with scalability** and heavily rely on securing national or EU-level funding in order to be able to sustain their activities.



Every country in the EU, despite having relevant food literacy efforts and showing promise, demonstrates some level of gap in its program delivery; for example, low-income and rural groups often lack access to tailored programs, and critical reflection, which is a key dimension of food literacy, is frequently underemphasized.

Other factors such as a limited continuity between childhood education and adult application of interventions seems to also reduce long-term impact, together with existing resources often being fragmented and underutilized, restricting their potential for broader adoption.

Specific analyses are available in this report with general and more specific recommendations tailored to each country, ensuring targeted strategies to overcome unique national challenges.

### The gap analysis and stakeholder outreach revealed stark disparities across the EU.

Countries with more developed food systems, showing good **program coverage and high maturity (such as the Netherlands and Denmark)**, are often supported by strong infrastructure and expertise that enables development of comprehensive interventions independently, but also easier access to larger EU funding grants with well-developed and expert-led project proposals.

In turn, countries with lower levels of food education and socioeconomic development such as **Bulgaria and Romania, face additional challenges** due to their limited infrastructure, poor existing program coverage, and low population maturity in terms of food literacy and healthy habits.

These two countries' existing interventions prove not enough to cover significant gaps, with systemic barriers such as socioeconomic conditions and limited experience in developing or sustaining relevant interventions affecting their long-term development. **As a result, they present a clear opportunity for EIT Food to prioritize investments, where targeted interventions could provide the highest impact.**

The report emphasizes the general need for more localized solutions that adapt educational content to cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic realities, particularly for underserved populations. Additionally, practical education and exposure to real food and food systems through hands-on experiences has shown great results in advancing food literacy in most environments and target audiences.

Extending food literacy beyond schools into households is another critical area, which ensures that lessons learned in classrooms translate into more lasting behavioral changes at home, and lastly, leveraging innovative tools, such as gamified learning and **digital platforms**, can help make food literacy more engaging and accessible, particularly for younger audiences.



# Introduction and Objective



## 2. Introduction and Objective

Food literacy is now playing a key role in shaping healthier, more sustainable, and more resilient food systems throughout Europe.

The importance of general education about food and its systems is evident not only with regard to maintaining healthy habits and consuming quality food, but also to providing an ecologically and socially conscious consumer population through which one can gain the tools to make intelligent, responsible choices for food production, preparation, and consumption.

In the EU, food literacy involves a wide range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Understanding health and nutrition aspects of food is the traditional and most essential content, but more recent themes such as managing the complexity of the food system, empowering communities, and reducing food waste indicate that it is equally about what we eat as how the food is being farmed, sourced, prepared, shared, and handled in different environments.



**Essentially, food literacy can be described and characterized through three related dimensions:**

### **Factual knowledge,**

which involves an awareness of evidence-based facts about food and food systems

### **Procedural knowledge,**

which contains practical skills such as cooking, gardening, and meal planning

### **Critical reflection and engagement,**

which allows individuals to examine food systems, consider their broader impacts, and be active agents in shaping sustainable and equitable food environments.

Together, these dimensions enable citizens to navigate complex food systems and support healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable practices.

It is in this context that this audit report, commissioned at the initiative of EIT Food, aims to provide a comprehensive mapping of food literacy projects, initiatives, and best practices across the EU. By country-to-country survey, desk research, and stakeholder consultation, the aim was to note relevant programs and significant food literacy initiatives in schools, groups, public authorities, NGOs, private enterprise companies, and other agencies involved in the topic areas covered. The extent of this exercise is as much a reflection of the variety of responses received as of the shared determination within EU member states for establishing food-literate societies.

### The objectives with the report were:

- |                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>To map and categorize</b> the scope of food literacy programs in the EU, with emphasis on leading countries, new models, and emerging trends</p> | <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>To identify gaps and opportunities</b> in terms of thematic scope, target groups, formats, and regional disparities, through a rigorous analysis framework that integrates program data and key health and socioeconomic indicators</p> | <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>To inform policy and practice,</b> with practical recommendations for scaling impact, establishing cooperation, and extending food literacy to all sectors of society, including the most vulnerable or marginalised</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The subsequent pages outline the report approach, offering an overview of the landscape and specific country-level information based on quantitative data and qualitative stakeholder interviews. By highlighting both positives and ongoing issues within the EU food literacy landscape, this report seeks to inform not only EIT Food but policymakers, practitioners, and funders in creating **more cohesive, inclusive, and effective food literacy strategies; ultimately towards healthier individuals, thriving communities, and an overall more sustainable future for the EU.**

# Methodology



## 3.1. Data Collection and Categorization

The desk research for this audit report was designed to systematically identify, map, and categorize food literacy programs and initiatives across all EU Member States. The process was divided into two distinct phases: **Perimeter** and **Categorization**, each with specific objectives and methodologies.

### Perimeter Phase

The objective of the perimeter phase was to establish a comprehensive database of food literacy programs in the EU by conducting an exhaustive search at the country level. This phase focused on identifying programs and gathering foundational information about them; the research defined "food literacy programs" as currently operational initiatives that proactively implemented or developed educational or change-oriented activities, comprehensively addressing at least two of the three dimensions of food literacy (Procedural Knowledge, Factual Knowledge, and Critical Reflection and Engagement).

The Perimeter phase was conducted as a systematic search for food literacy-related programs in each EU Member State, and for every identified program, compiling key details, including: Program Name, Funding Sources, Implementing Entities, Objective, and Contact details. After completing the initial data collection for all countries, the perimeter was enriched with stakeholders interviews from each program to validate the data and gather further insights.

### Categorization Phase

Following the perimeter phase, the categorization phase aimed to analyze the programs in greater depth by mapping their associated initiatives and classifying them based on predefined variables. This allowed us to understand the scope, focus, and target audience of each initiative within the broader program framework.



**1. Mapping Initiatives:** many programs encompassed multiple initiatives (e.g., a single program might include workshops, online courses, and awareness campaigns). Each initiative was treated as a separate entity for analysis.



**1. Key Variables of Analysis:** each initiative was mapped and categorized using a structured framework of variables, ensuring consistency and comparability across all entries. The main segments of analysis included:

### a. Key Focus Areas:

- Initiatives were classified based on their primary objectives in 5 main segments, which were:



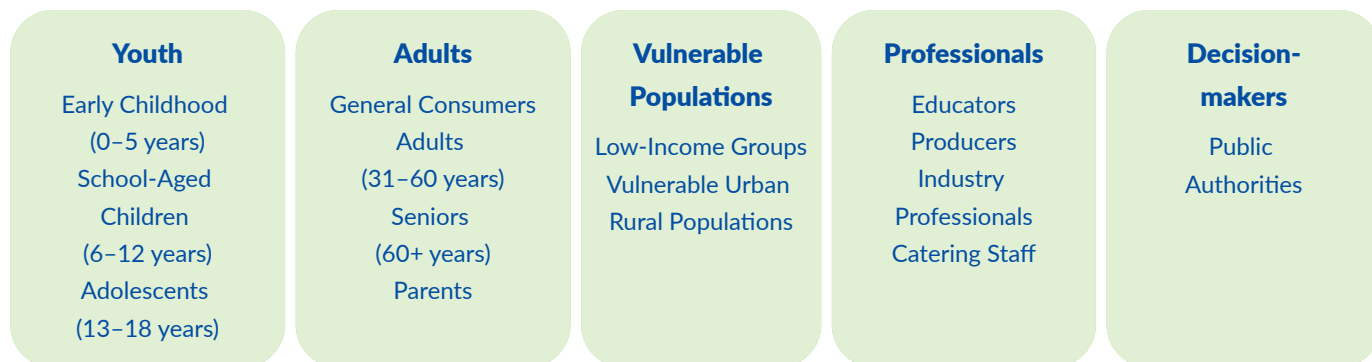
### b. Type of Program:

- The delivery format of each initiative was also categorized, including:



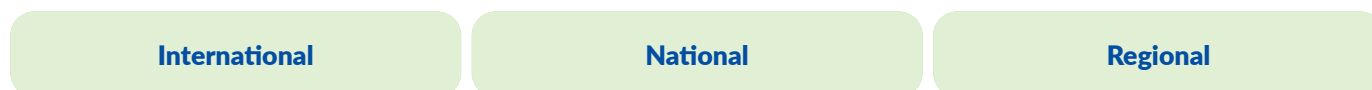
### c. Target Audience:

- Initiatives were segmented in 5 groups by their intended audience, that included:



### d. Geographical Scope:

- The geographic reach of each initiative was recorded as:



### e. Timeline/Duration:

- Initiatives were also classified based on their operational timeline:



## 3.2. Gap Analysis Framework

The gap analysis evaluates food literacy programs across EU member states to identify areas with insufficient program coverage and high potential impact. The framework combines program delivery metrics with socioeconomic and health indicators to assess gaps and prioritize interventions.

The analysis is structured around two axes:

### 1. Program Coverage

Measures the extent to which food literacy programs adequately cover the national population, address key themes, relevant target audiences, delivery formats, and demonstrate national-level development. Scores range from 100 (excellent coverage) to 0 (insufficient coverage).

#### **a. Programs per Capita**

Measures the number of food literacy programs relative to the population size. This metric highlights whether a country has sufficient programs to meet its population's needs.

#### **b. Thematic Coverage**

Assesses the breadth and depth of focus areas addressed by programs, such as Healthy Eating, Food Waste Reduction, and Culinary Skills. A higher score indicates that more themes are adequately covered.

#### **c. Target Audience Reach**

Evaluates whether programs effectively include key groups such as youth, adults, vulnerable populations, and decision-makers, through depth and breadth analysis.

#### **d. Delivery Formats**

Examines the diversity of methods used to deliver programs, such as workshops, e-learning platforms, or community-based initiatives, through depth and breadth analysis.

#### **e. Geographic Scope**

Analyzes the number of purely national initiatives within each country, demonstrating the country's capability to address food literacy independently.

## 2. Country Maturity

Measures the level of development of a country in terms of food literacy, taking into account its specific health, nutrition, and socioeconomic indicators, in order to assess the country's capacity to address these themes independently. Scores range from 0 (critical need) to 100 (low need)

### a. Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Measures the percentage of the population meeting WHO dietary guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake.

Source: Eurostat, *daily consumption of fruit and vegetables by sex, age and educational attainment level*

### b. Childhood and Adult Obesity Rates

Assesses the prevalence of obesity among children and adult population.

Source: OECD Health Statistics, WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI) round 6

### c. Food Insecurity Rates

Evaluates the percentage of the population with limited access to adequate food.

Source: World Bank, *Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population (%)*

### d. Socioeconomic Vulnerability

Acts as a proxy for economic capacity to implement programs and to understand country development - includes GPD per capita, income inequality, and poverty rate.

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators (GDP per capita)*; Eurostat, *AROPE Rate (%)*; World Bank, *Gini Coefficient*

Each metric is normalized to a scale of 0–10 to ensure comparability. Composite scores for Program Coverage and Potential Impact are calculated using weighted averages.

# The Food Literacy Landscape



# 1. The Food Literacy Landscape

## 4.1. Emerging Trends and Policy Developments Worldwide

## 4.1. Emerging Trends and Policy Developments Worldwide

This section provides an in-depth look at food literacy initiatives and developments across three specific countries: the United States, Canada, and Australia. Each country presents distinct approaches shaped by their unique social, environmental, and educational contexts. By examining their strategies, successes, and challenges, some insight can be extracted from the evolving landscape of food literacy and the innovative practices driving progress in diverse settings for later comparison with the European Union.

### United States

**In the U.S., food literacy** is a powerful response to the challenges of a highly corporatized food system, where efficiency often overshadows equity and ecological sustainability. Specific initiatives focused on explaining food systems and promoting local food sourcing play an important role in addressing these challenges, for example, The Edible Schoolyard Project, inspired by Alice Waters' Berkeley initiative, now spans over 6,200 school and community sites globally. Additionally, recent surveys from Edible Schoolyard NYC reveal that **96% of students participate in tasting the food they help prepare, 70% discover new fruits or vegetables, and 82% of teachers observe stronger academic engagement**, particularly in subjects like math and science, thanks to the project's integrated edible education approach.

Supported by the **USDA's Farm to School Program** which has directed roughly \$5 million annually since 2012 to gardens, cooking classes, and farm partnerships, one-third of U.S. school **districts now benefit from these initiatives**. Only 28% of U.S. adults demonstrate high food literacy, with higher rates linked to healthier diets. Efforts include community programs like SNAP-Ed, EFNEP, and Cooking Matters, alongside digital tools such as MyPlate.gov and Fooducate. Yet inconsistent resources, varying program quality, and structural barriers continue to limit sustained improvements in nutrition knowledge and practical food skills nationwide. Despite these challenges, the U.S. model demonstrates how hands-on, integrated education, powered by community partnerships, can foster healthier habits while connecting students to broader food and environmental systems.

### Canada

In turn, **Canada** has embraced food literacy as a catalyst for addressing climate change, inequity, and food insecurity. In British Columbia, the Feed BC initiative aims for schools **to source at least 30% of their food locally**, thus bridging student food education with regional economic support. Studies at Lord Roberts Elementary demonstrate that when children grow produce like kale, **90% are willing to taste it**, highlighting the strength of experiential learning.

Another standout example is the Indigenous-led Learning Circles: Local Healthy Food to School initiative in Hazelton/Upper Skeena. Between 2016 and 2018, the program distributed over 100 kg of berries and 150 kg of local meat across three communities, alongside 5 to 15 community workshops annually reaching hundreds of participants. These co-governed efforts exemplify culturally rooted, land-centered food literacy, with emerging data collection underway to track long-term behavior change.

Classroom integration typically **spans health, science, Indigenous land knowledge, and hands-on practices such as gardening, cooking, and composting**. Educators tend to deploy a practice architecture framework encompassing language, action, and relationships to anchor these lessons in local relevance, and donor and government-funded programs continue to fuel innovation, particularly in Indigenous and newcomer communities. Though challenged by provincial disparities and sometimes relevant resource limitations, Canada's food literacy landscape is evolving grounded in cultural inclusion, curriculum integration, evaluation, and local economic impact.

## Australia

Lastly, **Australia's food literacy** efforts respond to rising obesity, poor dietary habits, and inequitable food access, particularly in rural and multicultural communities. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2022 National Health Survey, only 6.5% of Australian adults meet the recommended daily vegetable intake, and 55% meet fruit intake guidelines. A 2021 VicHealth evaluation of its Cooking Skills Program found 78% of participants reported improved cooking confidence, and 67% increased vegetable consumption. The evaluation also reported that 72% of participants were still using the skills learned six months after completing the program.

The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program (SAKGNP), launched in 2008, integrates kitchen and garden-based learning into school curricula, aiming to foster healthy eating habits and sustainable food practices among students, and now operates in over 1,000 schools and early childhood settings, delivering more than 3 million garden and cooking experiences each year. Their results highlight its effectiveness in improving dietary habits while delivering measurable social and economic benefits.

Externally conducted research in Victoria reveals that children in SAKGNP schools are more than twice as likely to try new foods, with marked student engagement improvement, social skills, and school cohesion. Qualitative analysis supports the need for fun food education, taste-as-education, cooking, and mealtimes as a pathway to a healthy diet for life. Australian innovations also include the development of classroom models to pilots in early childhood and high schools, curriculum changes in multicultural settings, and explicit contributions to national policy discussions of health, diversity, and cultural inclusion. However, funding shortfalls, infrastructure constraints, and insufficient preparation of teachers remain as obstacles to equitable access.

Australia's food literacy landscape is then characterized by strong integration of community-based programs, culturally tailored resources, and policy engagement at state and national levels. While these initiatives reach diverse populations, evaluations highlight that long-term impact depends on stable funding, infrastructure investment, and workforce development to ensure programs remain accessible and effective across urban, regional, and remote communities.

While each country navigates distinct systems and priorities, their food literacy efforts do show some common strengths:

- **Experiential, cross-curricular integration:** U.S. garden-to-kitchen programs with math and science; Canada's Indigenous land-based learning; Australia's early-life immersion across subject areas.
- **Focus on evidence-backed outcomes:** U.S. surveys reveal 96% student tasting rates and 70% new food preferences; Canada's 90% trial rates; Australia's odds ratio of 2.0 and investment multiplier of 5.07.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Focus on underserved communities from U.S. urban and rural low-income areas to Canada's Indigenous initiatives and Australia's multicultural outreach.
- **Community partnerships and co-governance:** Collaborations with farmers, nonprofits, Indigenous nations, and policymakers are central in each country.
- **Policy embedding:** From USDA grants and provincial procurement mandates to integration with national health and cultural inclusion policies.
- **Ongoing innovations:** Digital tools such as Common Bytes, decolonized education, early childhood extensions, and formal evaluation frameworks are shaping food literacy's future.

These three countries each illustrate how well-implemented food literacy programs grounded in hands-on learning, community engagement, cultural relevance, and rigorous evaluation can build healthier individuals and stronger communities. While challenges remain in scaling, funding, and equity, the evidence seems to be clear: experiential, cross-sector food education is a potent strategy to advance food literacy as a whole. As environmental and health pressures grow, these country-specific insights form a roadmap toward more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems worldwide.

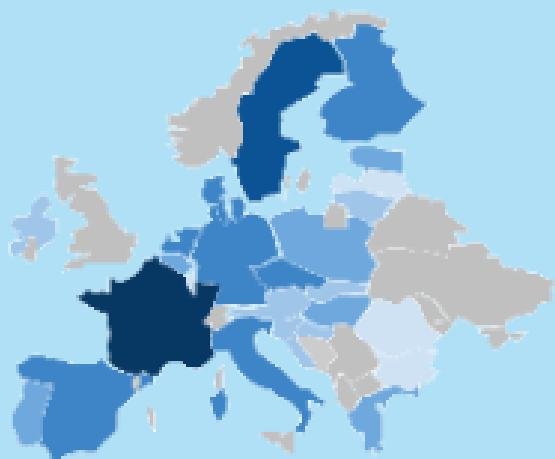


# 1. The Food Literacy Landscape

## 4.2. The EU Food Literacy Landscape

# The EU Food Literacy Landscape

## Heat Map



 Number of entities **425**

 Number of programs **437**

 Number of initiatives **892**

### Most initiatives

### Less initiatives

 France **63**

 Cyprus **16**

 Italy **53**

 Bulgaria **17**

 Sweden **52**

 Malta **18**

| Most common Key Focus Areas  | # of initiatives | % over total |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Healthy Eating               | 358              | 17%          |
| Environmental Sustainability | 338              | 16%          |
| Food Systems                 | 286              | 14%          |

| Most common Target Audiences | # of initiatives | % over total |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| School-Aged Children (6-12)  | 393              | 24%          |
| Adult Consumers              | 218              | 13%          |
| Adolescents (13-18)          | 193              | 12%          |

## 1. Overview of the EU landscape

The food literacy landscape across the EU is both large and diverse, reflecting the richness of its member states and their shared vision for healthier, more sustainable food systems, as the numbers above show. The research identified over 430 programs implementing more than 880 initiatives throughout the 27 EU-member states. Countries such as Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy, and France are leading in program scale and development, although smaller nations also show significant participation and have delivered impressive results.



# "Schools are a key focus, with nearly 25% of all interventions targeting children aged 6 to 12."

There are relevant EU-wide initiatives and frameworks such as the **EU School Scheme**, that offer overarching guidance and help align efforts across member states, while non-governmental programs like Slow Food, ProVeg, and other multinational networks drive innovation and foster cross-border collaboration.

At the same time, **regional contexts strongly shape national strategies**. Nordic countries will have a tendency to emphasize public health and sustainability in school meal provision, while the **Mediterranean countries** will be likely to emphasize **local product and culinary traditions**, leveraging food literacy as part of cultural heritage.

While the nations of the Eastern European region usually have structural resource constraints, they are rapidly accelerating their work at food literacy with newly empowered EU-funded programs and pilot initiatives.

**All this diversity enriches the EU food literacy environment**, but also at the risk of fragmentation from variations in priorities, implementation strategies, and access to EU-funded programs across regions.

Overall, most programs focus on healthy eating, environmental sustainability, nutrition education, and food systems, which together account for more than 60 percent of all initiatives.

As expected, schools are a key focus, with nearly 25 percent of all interventions specifically targeting children aged 6 to 12, and other programs often involving teachers, parents, and catering staff in many cases. Workshops, educational materials, and hands-on experiences such as **school gardens and farm visits** are commonly used, helping to make food education interactive and meaningful from an early age.

Despite this progress, significant challenges remain. Some types of initiatives are relatively isolated and have little focus in comparison to other major topics, such as **cultural traditions, sensory education, social inclusion, or food sharing**.

Vulnerable groups, particularly low-income and rural populations, often have limited access to food literacy programs and receive less specific focus in interventions.

Additionally, **Critical Reflection**, although recognized as a key element of food literacy, is often not fully integrated into the core curricula of programs - instead, it tends to play a secondary role rather than being treated as an essential dimension in educating audiences about food and its systems.



## 2. Distribution of variables

The two major key focus area delivered in the EU Food Literacy Landscape are **Healthy Eating and Sustainability**, representing 34% of the initiatives, whereas **Social Inclusion and Health Promotion** barely account for the 3% of the initiatives.

EU Food Literacy programs **have a clear focus on young population** as 24% of the initiatives are delivered to kids aged 6 to 12 years old, 12% to adolescents (13 - 18 years) and 10% to childs (0-5 years), all of the three accounting for the 46% of the initiatives analyzed. On the other side, rural population, urban vulnerable or young adults lack specific initiatives, accounting only for 3% of the total.

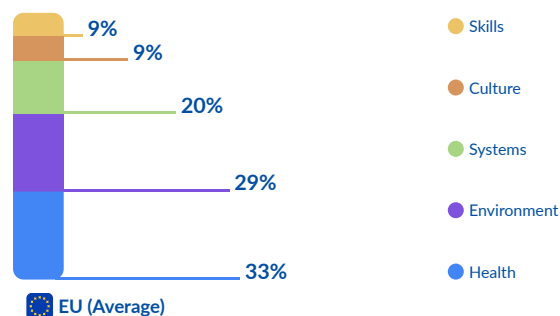
The vast majority of initiatives delivered in the EU have a hands on **methodology, with workshops, sessions and classes as the main formats**. On the other hand, EU lack digital delivery penetration as E-Learning and Network platforms only account for 6% of the initiatives format.

| Key Focus Areas               | # of initiatives | % over total | Target audience                   | # of initiatives | % over total | Program Type/Format               | # of initiatives | % over total |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Healthy Eating                | 358              | 17%          | School-Aged Children (6-12 years) | 393              | 23%          | Workshops                         | 334              | 19%          |
| Environmental Sustainability  | 338              | 17%          | Consumers                         | 217              | 13%          | Educational Materials             | 310              | 18%          |
| Food Systems                  | 286              | 14%          | Adolescents (13-18 years)         | 192              | 11%          | Events                            | 154              | 9%           |
| Nutrition Education           | 280              | 14%          | Educators                         | 168              | 10%          | Training Sessions                 | 150              | 9%           |
| Local Sourcing                | 175              | 9%           | Early Childhood (0-5 years)       | 167              | 10%          | Physical classes                  | 117              | 7%           |
| Culinary Skills               | 123              | 6%           | Industry professionals            | 95               | 5%           | Awareness or Education Campaigns  | 116              | 7%           |
| Food Cultures & Traditions    | 101              | 5%           | Parents                           | 91               | 5%           | Guides                            | 98               | 6%           |
| Food Waste Reduction          | 90               | 4%           | Producers                         | 88               | 5%           | Policy and Systemic Interventions | 85               | 5%           |
| Advocacy and Policy Influence | 70               | 3%           | Catering staff                    | 81               | 5%           | E-Learning Platforms              | 75               | 4%           |
| Community Empowerment         | 60               | 3%           | Public authorities                | 71               | 4%           | Toolkit                           | 59               | 3%           |
| Taste & Sensory Education     | 51               | 2%           | Low-income                        | 21               | 1%           | Online articles                   | 56               | 3%           |
| Pleasure of Food & Sharing    | 45               | 2%           | Rural                             | 21               | 1%           | Research and Publications         | 55               | 3%           |
| General Health Promotion      | 46               | 2%           | Urban vulnerable                  | 14               | 0,9%         | Volunteer Programs                | 49               | 3%           |
| Social Inclusion              | 30               | 1%           | Young Adults (19-30 years)        | 9                | 0,6%         | Group visits                      | 49               | 3%           |
|                               |                  |              |                                   |                  |              | Network platforms                 | 26               | 2%           |

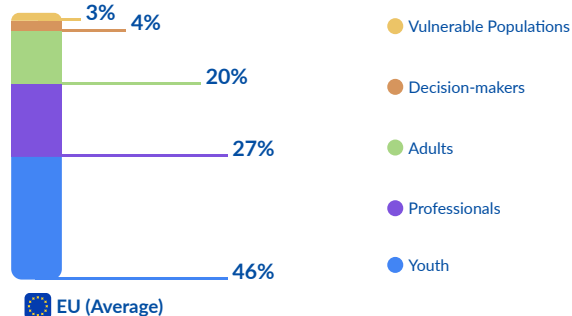
### 3. Distribution per segment

Each category of **Key Focus Area** and **Target Audiences** were further segmented into groups for more easily understandable conclusions and possibility for actionable recommendations:

**Key Focus Areas x EU Average  
(% initiatives)**



**Target Audiences x EU Average  
(% initiatives)**



When initiatives are examined by category, it is clear that the **EU food literacy environment** emphasizes strongly **health and nutrition**, with a focus on targeting particular groups, as well as encouraging overall **environmental sustainability**. This emphasis is an indication of increased awareness of the significance of healthy eating and ecological stewardship, which are at the heart of most food-related policy priorities throughout the member states. There is also less attention and intervention on more general concerns such as food systems, food as part of culture, and developing working skills in areas of food literacy. These, while no less important, are often less funded and profiled, maybe limiting the cumulative impact of food literacy interventions.



In turn, the **primary target groups** for these programs are **youth and school children**, which is logical because schools provide a structured environment in which programs can be developed systematically. This is also a population that is particularly valuable because early learning sets permanent tendencies, but it also reflects a priority for institutionalized school environments rather than informal or community education. Apart from youth, **professionals** (mainly those working in children's education environments such as teachers and catering staff) also constitute a significant segment of the program beneficiaries, ensuring that adults engaged in shaping the food experience of children are **competent and informed**, raising the impact of the initiatives in school environments.

## 4. Relevant cases, actors, and frameworks

Some food literacy programs stand out for their comprehensive approach, addressing multiple topics through a single intervention or a series of initiatives, and others excel by focusing on a specific issue and addressing it on a very large scale. These programs can operate at regional, national, or even international levels, originated by governments, NGOs or private entities, with some extending their reach beyond the EU. Below, it highlights some of the most relevant and impactful international examples found across the EU.

### Slow Food

#### Key Focus Areas



Food cultures and traditions, environmental sustainability, advocacy and policy influence

#### Target Audience

Consumers, producers, educators



#### Geographical Reach



Active globally, with strong implementation in EU countries such as Italy, France, Spain, and Germany

Slow Food - as opposed to the fast food concept - is a grassroots movement advocating for good, clean, and fair food. Through school gardens, workshops, and advocacy campaigns, it educates citizens on the importance of biodiversity and sustainable farming while preserving traditional food cultures. Its initiatives encompass several countries globally (over 160), empowering communities to reconnect with their food systems and inspire policy changes

### EU School Scheme

#### Key Focus Areas



Nutrition education, healthy eating, general health promotion

#### Target Audience

School-aged children (6–12 years), adolescents (13–18 years), parents



#### Geographical Reach



Implemented EU-wide, including all 27 Member States

The EU School Scheme is one of the largest EU-focused interventions, aiming to provide subsidized milk, dairy, fruits, and vegetable products to schools, combined with educational activities to promote healthy eating habits. Activities are implemented at the national level, with each Member State responsible for directing and tailoring the scheme through its designated authorities. By improving access to nutritious foods, the scheme fosters early awareness of balanced diets while simultaneously supporting local producers across Europe.

### SchoolFood4Change

#### Key Focus Areas



Healthy eating, environmental sustainability, culinary skills

#### Target Audience

School-aged children (6–12 years), catering staff, educators



#### Geographical Reach



Operates in 12 EU countries, including Finland, Sweden, Italy, Portugal, and the Netherlands

#### Funding Sources



EU programs and private sector partnerships

SchoolFood4Change is a major EU initiative coordinated by ICLEI (a network of 2,500 local and regional governments concerned with sustainable urban development) and brings relevant school food actors from 43 members to one table, aiming to transform school meals and food education by integrating sustainability into procurement practices and curricula. The program builds capacity among educators and catering staff while encouraging lifelong healthy and sustainable eating habits, having significantly improved the nutritional quality of school meals and raised awareness of sustainable food practices where applied.

## SAPERE Method

### Key Focus Areas



Taste and sensory education, healthy eating, food cultures and traditions

### Target Audience



School-aged children (6–12 years), educators, parents

### Geographical Reach



Implemented in several EU countries, including Finland, France, Italy, and Switzerland

SAPERE is a taste and sensory education method that focuses on helping children develop an appreciation for different tastes, textures, and aromas. Through tasting workshops and classroom activities, it encourages healthier eating habits and a deeper connection to food, and has been shown to improve children's willingness to try new foods, particularly fruits and vegetables. Throughout the EU, multiple programs adopt its methodologies in their initiatives with great success.

## Circular Foodshift

### Key Focus Areas



Food waste reduction, environmental sustainability

### Target Audience



Public authorities, industry professionals, and educators

### Geographical Reach



Baltic region

Circular Foodshift is an Interreg Baltic Sea funded program that promotes systemic change by embedding circular economy practices into food systems. It emphasizes reducing food waste, supporting local sourcing, and fostering collaboration across the food value chain, and the initiative has raised awareness about environmental impacts and supported businesses and governments in adopting sustainable practices in multiple countries and schools in the region, especially in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

## Nestlé for Healthier Kids

### Key Focus Areas



Healthy eating, nutrition education, general health promotion

### Target Audience



School-aged children (6–12 years), parents, educators

### Geographical Reach



Operates in over 80 countries globally, including several EU Member States such as Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Spain, and France

The Nestlé for Healthier Kids program (N4HK) promotes balanced diets and healthy lifestyle habits for children aged 3–12 years and supports parents and caregivers to raise healthier kids. The program offers educational resources, interactive workshops, and school-based activities designed to teach children about nutrition, meal preparation, and the importance of making informed food choices. Since its launch, the initiative has reached over 40 million children annually, empowering families and communities worldwide to raise healthier generations. In the EU, the program collaborates with schools and local partners to deliver tailored interventions that align with regional dietary guidelines and health priorities.

## 5. EU-wide trends and insights

Across the EU, multiple common themes regarding food literacy have emerged during the desk research. One of the most recurring of themes is the creation of networks designed to:

**1**  
**Bring together many actors of the food system or food value chain**

**2**  
**Connect like-minded programs to share best practices and relevant information**



Although these networks can be a **valuable resource**, in practice there is observed a more **saturated** and fragmented landscape, particularly with regard to peer-to-peer networks. While there is clear interest from regional programs to collaborate or form new connections, stakeholders report a lack of **effective information sharing** between existing networks, which may limit their potential. As a result, programs can feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of existing networks and still perceive a lack of connectivity. This could be addressed through a more specific and bottom-up approach to networking, one that is based on similarities between programs and countries, and focused on opportunities for **collaboration** and shared learning. A more unified approach could bring stakeholders together, developing these stronger partnerships and amplifying the impact of initiatives across multiple distinct regions.

Another common trend identified through the research is the development of toolkits designed **to support food literacy efforts**. While many of these resources are well-intentioned, they often end up underutilized. Toolkits are generally considered the final deliverable of a project and are frequently uploaded to websites without guidance on how to use them effectively, **motivation to incorporate them into daily practice**, or regular updates. As a result, they tend to sit dormant, failing to deliver the value they were created to provide. There is a clear necessity to shift these toward a more practical and actionable model, delivering clear instructions, training sessions, or real-world examples that show how these tools can make a difference. A specific toolkit may provide value if it includes up-to-date information and is designed with long-term usability in mind.

Additionally, there often seems to be a sense of **redundancy** among many **food literacy programs**. Numerous projects tackle similar themes but operate independently, even within the same regions, leading to scattered efforts and missed opportunities for **consistency** and long-term impact. This is evident, for example, in the low number of vocational education programs for chefs and food service professionals compared to other types of programs - while **sustainable food systems** are gaining momentum, the professionals tasked with preparing and serving food often lack the skills to work with sustainable ingredients or implement **environmentally conscious practices**. Schools and training programs rarely focus on sustainable cooking, sometimes leaving a critical gap in the industry. Equipping chefs and food service workers with these skills wouldn't just be about filling a void, but more about enabling them to be active participants in driving systemic change.

With better coordination, practical application of resources, and targeted interventions, food literacy efforts across the EU could become far more impactful and cohesive, creating lasting change for diverse communities and industries alike.

## Gap Analysis

In order to comprehensively understand the landscape of food literacy interventions across the EU and to more easily identify opportunities for improvement and development, **the gap analysis reflects the level of development and necessity of a country** in terms of food literacy through two main axes.

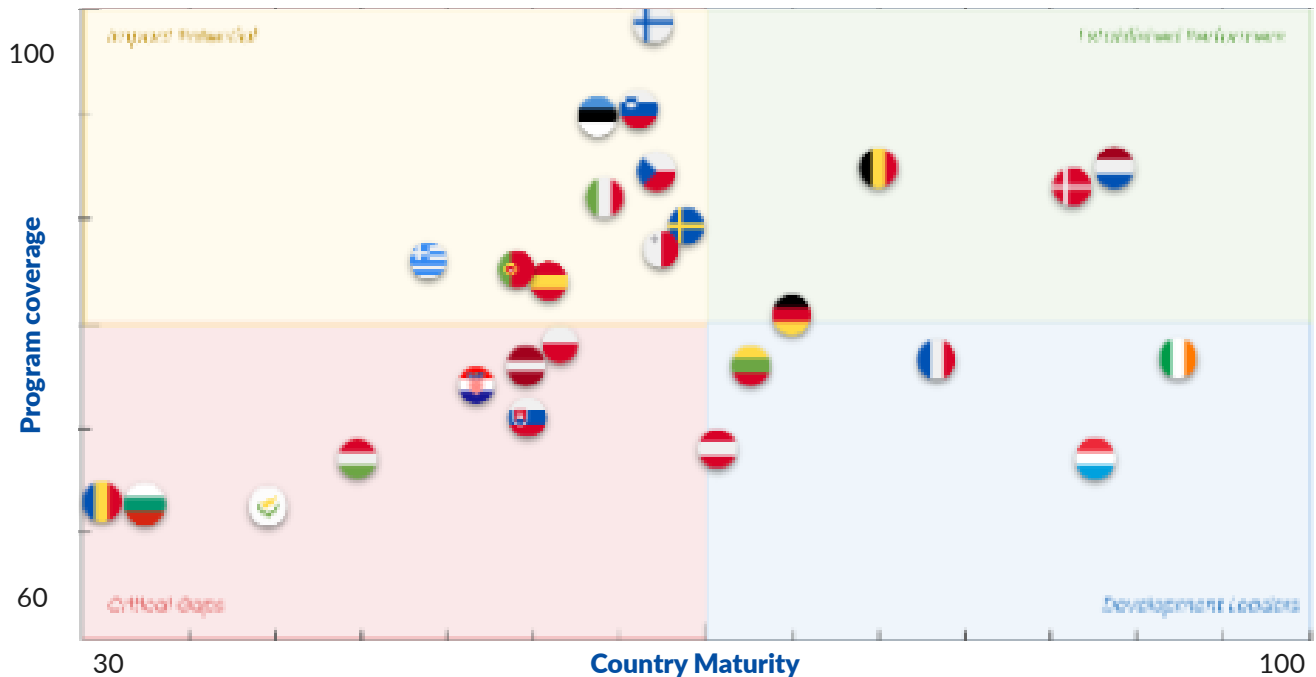
As described in the methodology, the first axis, Program Coverage, measures the quantity and diversity of food literacy initiatives in place in each of the countries analyzed, while the second, Country Maturity, intends to reflect the main food literacy indicators in order to observe if a country has food education already integrated into its society.

**The Research shows great differences between established performers** in Food Literacy, like Netherlands or Denmark, with long lasting delivery, and laggards like Romania or Bulgaria, which shows great room for improvement in terms of amount and quality of Food Literacy Delivery.

| Country name                                                                                       | Maturity Score | Coverage Score | Total Score |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
|  Netherlands      | 88,4           | 86,8           | 87,6        |
|  Denmark          | 86,6           | 86,0           | 86,3        |
|  Ireland        | 92,3           | 72,9           | 82,6        |
|  Belgium        | 75,2           | 83,9           | 79,6        |
|  Finland        | 62,1           | 95,4           | 78,8        |
|  Luxembourg     | 87,7           | 67,7           | 77,7        |
|  France         | 78,7           | 73,1           | 75,9        |
|  Estonia        | 61,8           | 87,0           | 74,4        |
|  Slovenia       | 60,4           | 87,0           | 73,7        |
|  Sweden         | 63,0           | 83,7           | 73,3        |
|  Germany        | 70,5           | 75,4           | 72,9        |
|  Malta          | 63,9           | 80,1           | 72,0        |
|  Czech Republic | 63,2           | 79,2           | 71,2        |
|  Italy          | 60,0           | 81,9           | 71,0        |
|  Lithuania      | 68,3           | 72,8           | 70,6        |
|  Austria        | 65,8           | 69,6           | 67,7        |
|  Spain          | 56,1           | 77,1           | 66,6        |
|  Portugal       | 55,1           | 78,0           | 66,6        |
|  Poland         | 57,2           | 74,0           | 65,6        |
|  Latvia         | 55,5           | 73,1           | 64,3        |
|  Greece         | 49,9           | 78,4           | 64,1        |
|  Slovakia       | 55,3           | 70,1           | 62,7        |
|  Croatia        | 52,7           | 72,0           | 62,3        |
|  Hungary        | 45,7           | 67,7           | 56,7        |
|  Cyprus         | 40,7           | 65,2           | 53,0        |
|  Bulgaria       | 31,0           | 65,7           | 48,4        |
|  Romania        | 28,5           | 62,6           | 45,6        |

## Impact Matrix

Each result from each country were allotted in an impact matrix, in order to further classify and more easily understand the level of opportunities and gaps present in each country



Countries can be segmented based on their scoring metrics, into 4 main categories:

| Category               | Result                       | # of Countries |
|------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Established Performers | High maturity, high coverage | 4              |
| Development Leaders    | High maturity, low coverage  | 5              |
| Impact Potential       | Low maturity, high coverage  | 10             |
| Critical Gaps          | Low maturity, low coverage   | 8              |

**Established Performers**

- Netherlands
- Denmark
- Belgium
- Germany

**Development Leaders**

- Ireland
- Luxembourg
- France
- Lithuania
- Austria

**Impact Potential**

- Finland
- Slovenia
- Estonia
- Malta
- Czech Republic
- Sweden
- Italy
- Portugal
- Spain
- Greece

**Critical Gaps**

- Slovakia
- Croatia
- Hungary
- Cyprus
- Poland
- Bulgaria
- Romania
- Latvia

## 1. Segment Analysis

### Established Performers

 Netherlands  Denmark  Belgium  Germany

These countries exhibit high program maturity and extensive coverage, indicating well-developed food literacy ecosystems.

#### Overview

- Established Performers are leaders in food literacy, with robust programs addressing diverse themes and audiences
- Their initiatives often serve as benchmarks for best practices in the EU

#### General Recommendations

##### Scale Proven Initiatives:

Collaborate with these countries to scale up their successful programs across the EU, particularly in regions with lower maturity or coverage.

##### Foster Cross-Border Collaboration:

Position these countries as regional hubs for knowledge-sharing and mentorship, enabling other Member States to adopt best practices.

##### Advance Innovation:

Support the development of cutting-edge projects, such as digital tools or experiential learning platforms, to maintain leadership in food literacy innovation.

### Development Leaders

 Ireland  Luxembourg  France  Lithuania  Austria

These countries have high program maturity due to positive food literacy indicators but relatively low program coverage, suggesting strong foundations that still could be expanded.

#### Overview

- Development Leaders may demonstrate expertise in designing impactful programs but may lack the breadth of implementation needed to reach all target audiences or regions, indicated by the lack of adequate coverage

#### General Recommendations

##### Expand Program Reach:

Partner with local stakeholders to scale existing initiatives to underserved regions or demographics within these countries.

##### Develop Targeted Projects:

Identify specific gaps (e.g., vulnerable populations or underrepresented themes) and co-develop new projects to address these needs.

##### Leverage Strengths for Pilots:

Use these countries as testbeds for innovative pilot projects that can later be scaled across the EU.

## Impact Potential



These countries have low maturity in terms of food development indicators but relatively high coverage, indicating significant potential for impact with targeted improvements.

### Overview

- Impact Potential countries have broad program reach but may lack depth or sophistication in their initiatives, demonstrating important needs that are currently unmet
- They represent an opportunity to amplify outcomes through capacity-building and program optimization

### General Recommendations

#### Enhance Program Quality:

Provide technical support to refine and strengthen existing initiatives, ensuring they align with best practices in food literacy.

#### Introduce Scalable Models:

Develop new projects tailored to the specific needs of these countries, focusing on replicable and scalable approaches.

#### Facilitate Knowledge Exchange:

Connect these countries with Established Performers and Development Leaders to adopt proven strategies and frameworks.

## Critical Gaps



These countries face both low maturity and low coverage, highlighting significant gaps in food literacy infrastructure and a high country-level need to advance these themes

### Overview

- Critical Gap countries require foundational investments to build food literacy systems from the ground up
- Barriers may include limited resources, lack of awareness, or systemic challenges

### General Recommendations

#### Build Foundational Programs:

Work with local stakeholders to design and implement foundational food literacy initiatives, targeting critical needs such as nutrition education and environmental sustainability.

#### Address Underserved Populations:

Prioritize projects that focus on vulnerable groups and rural areas, ensuring equitable access to food literacy resources.

#### Strengthen Local Capacity:

Invest in training and capacity-building efforts to empower local organizations and communities to sustain and expand food literacy efforts.

#### Secure Partnerships and Funding:

Collaborate with governments, NGOs, and private sector partners to mobilize resources and ensure long-term sustainability of new initiatives.

# Conclusions



## 5.1. Conclusions

The analysis of the EU's food literacy landscape has revealed some significant areas for further development. While some countries demonstrate strong existing food literacy with opportunities for improvement, others, despite good food literacy efforts, face unique national circumstances that affect its ability for lasting and broader impact.

The report identifies some important gaps across the EU that limit the effectiveness of current food literacy initiatives, mainly: a lack of adaptive education programs for vulnerable populations, meaning significant effort is required to tailor food education to their unique situations for accessibility and relevance; the underutilization of existing resources, where the challenge lies not in a lack of content but in the fragmentation and insufficient leveraging of existing materials; and a limited focus on adults and practical application, as the effectiveness of childhood education is often impacted by a lack of reinforcement in adult environments. Furthermore, there is a strong and growing trend towards more practical, hands-on programs, as evidence suggests that education without the ability to apply knowledge practically has limited real-world impact.

These gaps and emerging trends present clear opportunities for EIT Food to intervene and amplify its impact. Based on report findings, four main recommendations have been identified:



### 1. Make Healthy and Sustainable Food Education Truly Accessible

Across the EU, food-literacy initiatives often fail to reach vulnerable populations because existing materials are rarely adapted to specific cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic realities. EIT Food can help close this gap by launching a type of network of “adaptation labs”, consisting of physical or hybrid hubs in strategically selected regions. Each Lab could gather educators, community leaders, and nutrition experts to adapt proven materials, translating not just the language but also dietary examples, teaching methods, and practical guides to fit local preferences and constraints, while supporting the development of sustainable healthy habits. These Labs could train facilitators and track outcomes in both knowledge gains and household behaviour change, enabling continuous updates and adaptations in underserved areas, and helping ensure that food education is genuinely accessible, relevant, and reflective of local realities where it is needed most.

### 2. Scale and Centralize Existing Resources through an EU Food Literacy Idea Bank

Europe possesses a rich repository of educational content, curricular materials, and toolkits related to food literacy. However, these resources often remain fragmented, underutilized, or limited to the countries national outreach. EIT Food has a unique opportunity to address this gap by establishing a centralized and dynamic food literacy knowledge hub, or “idea bank,” designed to adapt, and disseminate proven programs while customizing resources to reflect local realities across EU member states. An idea bank could integrate key components such as impact data from the country of origin, implementation guides in multiple languages, feedback from programs implemented in other member states, partner matchmaking and call-for-ideas. It could also serve as a living platform where localized case studies are continuously collected and re-uploaded, ensuring the repository remains relevant and actionable.

### 3. Strengthen Household and Parental Engagement

The effectiveness of most school-based food literacy programs is sometimes compromised by a lack of continuity and reinforcement within the home setting. Without active parental support and the incorporation of healthy food habits into family routine, children's nutrition education is often not translated into long-term behavioral change. EIT Food could strategically build up food literacy interventions that actively extend to the home, e.g., by designing family cooking workshop models that can scale up, providing on a whole-meal basis, highly specialized facilitator training, and using innovative incentives for family member engagement. A highly suitable candidate for up-scaling implementation in Member States is the "Nutriplato" (Spain) model that provides integrated meal-planning packs, interactive digital content, and entertaining school-parent challenges.

### 4. Make Food Literacy Engaging: Use Taste, Technology, and Gamification

Traditional food education materials often struggle to inspire lasting behavioral change and can reduce enthusiasm for learning. In contrast, programs leveraging sensory engagement, structured challenges, and playful learning methodologies normally demonstrate superior results, particularly among youth. EIT Food could strategically invest in digital innovation and gamified food literacy tools that prioritize enjoyment, taste exploration, and compelling storytelling to significantly encourage motivation and practical skill-building. This strategic investment, aligned with modern behavior and growing interest in technologies, would support European-wide programs with localized content by leveraging mobile apps, AR, and other interactive tools to help consumers and youth populations confidently cook and enjoy food through immersive, engaging experiences that foster lasting healthy and sustainable habits.

Strengthening food literacy across the EU is a greater effort than an education campaign; it is a foundational commitment to public health, sustainable living, and economic stability. This report gives EIT Food a strategic framework in which to achieve the full potential of food literacy through identifying missing gaps and leveraging strengths, and, by applying recommendations and filling gaps presented in research, EIT Food can enable individuals, families, and communities to make informed food choices, drive demand for sustainable practices, and establish a more equitable and resilient food system.



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