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## CHAPTER 3

# Presenting the 10 cases

# 1. Presenting the three cases selected at national level



Image credit: Paul Holmbeck, former CEO of Organic Denmark

At national level, there are very few cases of SFS MSMs linked to the implementation of a holistic SFS policy, or connected to a policy-making process for food systems transformation. Nevertheless, this research identified a few cases concentrated in Europe, where some countries have adopted forward-looking and ambitious sustainable food systems policies and put in place or connected them to MSMs for their formulation, implementation and/or evaluation.

In general terms, the governance of food systems in African countries and cities happens in an uncoordinated and unintegrated way (Smit, 2016). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the food and nutrition security approach prevails, with different types of participatory governance mechanisms in place (e.g. food and nutrition security commissions, committees,

boards), depending on the country. In Asia, policy-making is mostly state-driven, and food issues tend to be addressed by ministries of agriculture, although there is some evidence of intersectoral coordination, particularly at local level.

Some recent developments, such as the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council and the UK's Advisory Panel (mentioned in Chapter 3.2) suggest that the multi-stakeholder approach to national food policy formulation and implementation is expanding.

The following section presents a summary of the three SFS MSMs selected at national level: France, Denmark and India. The most relevant features are compiled from a literature review and the results from both surveys.



## 1.2. Denmark: Organic Denmark



Image credit: Paul Holmbeck, former CEO of Organic Denmark

### 1.2.1. About Organic Denmark

Organic Denmark is a registered membership association mobilizing all actors across the organic supply chain, and a leading force behind the formulation and implementation of many ambitious national organic policies and strategies and a leading contributor to the world's first national Organic Action Plan.<sup>60</sup> Over the years, it has expanded its representation base to become a broad and inclusive NGO, gaining visibility and legitimacy. In this SFS MSM, public sector involvement is achieved through strong and constant formal and informal collaboration with the government at different levels (e.g. ministries, political parties, members of parliament, municipalities). The Danish food sector has a long-standing tradition of multi-stakeholder collaboration, and Organic Denmark also collaborates with several other food-related SFS MSMs operating in the country.<sup>61</sup>

In 1987, before the creation of Organic Denmark, the Danish government established its Organic Food Advisory Council. This council was intended to be the official national SFS MSM, focused on organic food promotion. For a decade, it was a central meeting place and policy incubator that improved networks and collaboration among organic and conventional farm organizations; trade unions representing farm and food industry labour; and environmental organizations. However, developing the organic sector required an agility, contact frequency and depth of collaboration in relation to both market actors and the Danish parliament and ministries that the council could not provide. In this context, Organic Denmark mobilized and actively led various groups of actors to increase the supply of and demand for organic food products. It created the momentum for a movement that was rooted in the promotion of organic agriculture and the development of the world's strongest market

<sup>60</sup><https://www.futurepolicy.org/healthy-ecosystems/denmarks-organic-action-plan-working-together-for-more-organics/>

<sup>61</sup>The Danish Agriculture and Food Council represents industry and farmers; Food Nation is a public-private partnership focused on advancing the Danish food cluster and promoting Denmark's organic credentials abroad; and the Organic Food Advisory Council, which advises the Ministry of Environment and Food, is a multi-stakeholder council that represents Denmark's food cluster, including all types of farmers, environmental and consumer NGOs, retailers, food companies and the agriculture industry. Different stakeholders meet and discuss initiatives for the development of the organic sector.

for organic food. The traction generated by Organic Denmark in advancing the organic movement, organic policy, market development and multi-stakeholder collaboration consolidated it as the main inclusive, active and effective MSM for the promotion of sustainable food systems in Denmark.

Organic Denmark itself was a coalition of eight organizations of organic farmers, food companies, food professionals and consumers, all of which moved into an “Organic House” in 1998 and merged into one national organization in 2002. The whole process of setting up this SFS MSM took four years and was supported by the government, which granted three years of project and start-up funding for the Organic House, paving the way for Organic Denmark’s work. The leadership of Organic Denmark’s first director, Paul Holmbeck, was instrumental in bringing together all value chain actors and other platform partners to work in close partnership.

Organic Denmark encourages collective action and supports new initiatives that arise among its members, while also leading citizen consultation processes and food systems knowledge management. The SFS MSM can be credited with embedding a multi-stakeholder participatory approach in Danish food policy formulation processes. It has also created partnerships with all retail leaders, catalysing market growth, consumer awareness and economic sustainability for organic producers. These partnerships also allowed Organic Denmark to draw in-depth market knowledge into the policy process, and mobilize commercial stakeholders to implement policy goals.

Although Organic Denmark operates at national level, it also establishes collaborations with actors at municipal and local levels, working with almost half of Denmark’s municipalities. Municipalities and public procurement processes are important in stimulating increased demand for organics; 35 per cent of all municipalities have actively promoted conversion to organic farming in order to protect drinking water supplies and natural areas in cities and generate economic development in rural areas.

Organic Denmark’s work is guided by the food systems approach and the landscape approach<sup>62</sup> in integrating policy and practice for multiple land uses and managing

food systems trade-offs. Since its creation, the SFS MSM has always worked with broad sustainability principles and practices, based on international organic principles (health, ecology, fairness and care), also represented in the 10 principles of agroecology.<sup>63</sup>

To date, it has focused on organic food production, marketing and consumption, and also environmental degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss, promoting organic farming as a policy tool that is useful in addressing these intertwined challenges.<sup>64</sup>

The SFS MSM has an annual budget of approximately EUR 8 million, funded by different sources; about 75 per cent of the budget comes from public or public-private funding pools. Organic Denmark receives no general operating funding, but project funding for market development, innovation in organic farm practices, consumer information and other activities has allowed it to build critical competencies in all of these areas. Funding covers expenses for coordination, salaries, meetings, learning exchanges, market and technical studies and experimentation, consultancies, production of communication materials, campaigns and market development of organic products.

### 1.2.2. Structure and governance

#### Structure

Organic Denmark is a highly participatory SFS MSM comprising farmers, food companies,<sup>65</sup> food services, food professionals (such as chefs and kitchen workers) and consumers. Through close collaboration, it acts as a change agent in the market and in political life. Close partnerships with supermarkets and connections to the public sector at all administrative and policy-making levels ensure a positive market ecosystem and political ecosystem in which sustainable (organic) food systems can thrive. Compared to other SFS MSMs, Organic Denmark has a less formal MSM structure, but a very effective network-based MSM culture. It involves more than 200 member companies, making it the largest representative of the organic food industry in Denmark. Members are invited to join by the director or other participants, but self-motivated stakeholders can also join the platform and bring in other actors from the organics network.

<sup>62</sup>A landscape approach is broadly defined as a framework to integrate policy and practice for multiple land uses, within a given area, to ensure equitable and sustainable use of land while strengthening measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change (Reed et al., 2015).

<sup>63</sup><http://www.fao.org/3/i9037en/i9037en.pdf>

<sup>64</sup>“Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance ecological harmony ... There is more and more evidence highlighting the positive impacts of organic on a range of important issues including consumer health, biodiversity, animal welfare and the improved livelihoods of producers” (IFOAM, see <https://www.ifoam.bio/about-us/our-history-organic-30>).

<sup>65</sup><https://www.organicdenmark.com/brands>

Figures 37, 38 and 39 show the composition of the mechanism in terms of types of constituencies, sectors and food systems activities represented.

## Governance

Organic Denmark has a written document available for consultation that describes its strategic direction and good governance principles. Figure 40 shows the good governance principles that are practised.

The SFS MSM has internal procedures to put these principles into practice, such as mechanisms to address and manage conflicts of interest that may arise between different stakeholders. It also has internal procedures in place to achieve consensus and to capture all voices and communicate effectively with all parties, including those outside the platform when it is deemed necessary.

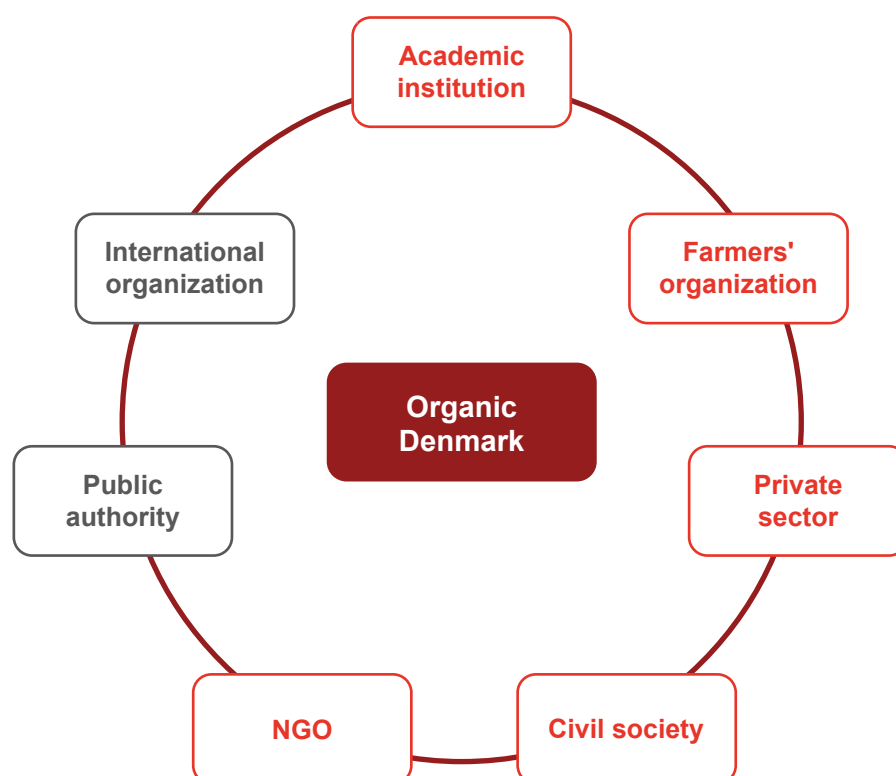
Its members meet in a large number of elected committees every two months following a predefined annual calendar, and the agenda is defined collaboratively. Gatherings also often take place when the organization convenes or when there are specific requests from one or more stakeholders. In addition, the SFS MSM has several councils and working groups that come together regularly. On average, 43 per cent of the stakeholders surveyed in this study attend all

meetings; 57 per cent of them dedicate more than 4 hours a month to the work of the SFS MSM, while the other 43 per cent dedicate 1 to 4 hours. In 86 per cent of the cases, members' participation is sponsored by the organizations they represent.

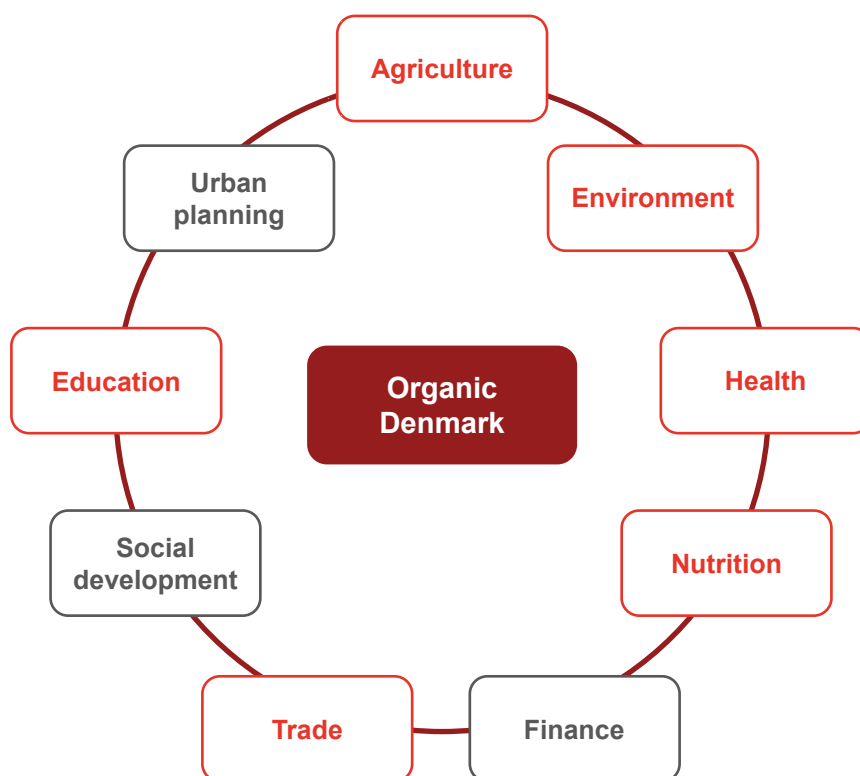
Prior to the meetings, the topics to be discussed are clearly defined and shared with all stakeholders. A facilitator is appointed to ensure inclusive and constructive dialogue and equal participation time for all stakeholders. A note-taker is also designated to prepare and share the minutes of the discussion and to receive and incorporate feedback from all participants. Finally, a report is distributed to all parties, including non-attendees. In addition to regular gatherings, members frequently engage, connect and collaborate through emails, letters, informal conversations, bilateral meetings and other means.

Organic Denmark's work includes capacity building of its members and lobbying and advocacy at different levels (global, regional, national, sub-national, local). The advocacy role comprises:

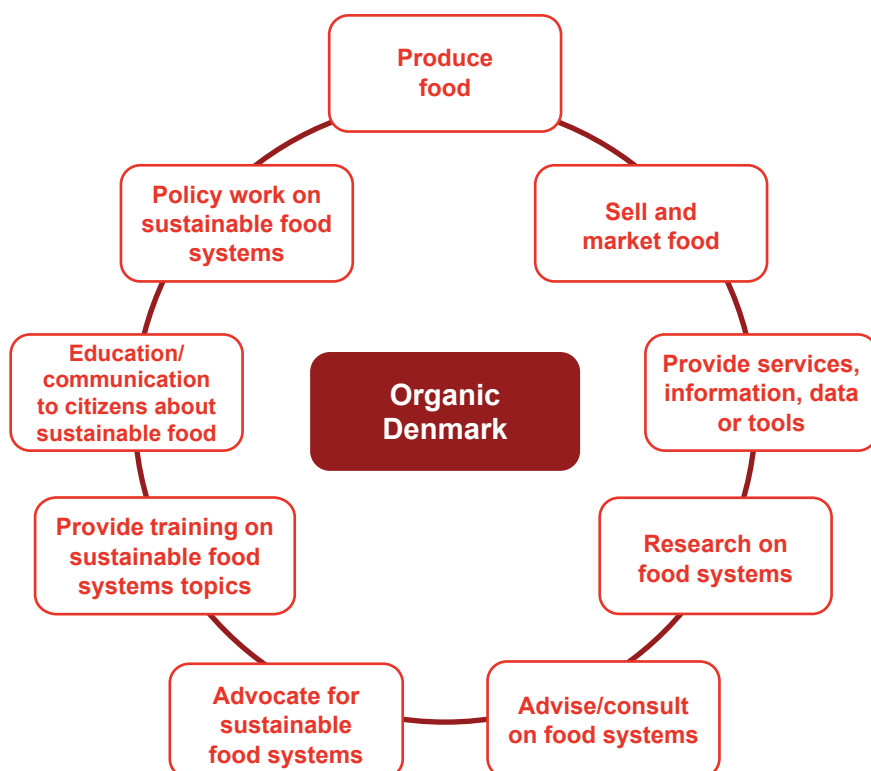
- Research, compilation and analysis of key issues;
- Capacity building of members to work on policy issues;



**Figure 37. Types of organizations (constituencies) represented in Organic Denmark (in red)**



**Figure 38. Sectors represented in Organic Denmark (in red)**



**Figure 39. Activities represented in Organic Denmark (in red)**

- Coalition building with other organizations to advance its policy objectives;
- Development of communication strategies for political advocacy work;
- Media relations to advance its policy objectives;
- Building of relationships with selected decision-makers;
- Development of skills, knowledge and actions related to administrative, institutional and/or legislative advocacy;
- Implementation of practices for funding advocacy work.

### 1.2.3. Policy formulation and implementation

#### SFS policy formulation

Denmark has worked intensively to develop its organic food sector, starting with the world's first legislation on organic farming in 1987. Denmark's Organic Food Advisory Council was established in the same year. Since then, stakeholders representing organic agriculture and food production, retailers, consumers, researchers, nature conservation, control systems and the Danish government have worked together to

develop good organic practices in all parts of the supply chain. Food policy has also been developed based on this diversity of perspectives and competencies. The council put together the first ambitious national Organic Action Plan in 1995, which was followed by further dynamic plans over the years. Regardless of the government in power, organic plans have always had strong political support in Denmark. Stakeholders credit Organic Denmark's close dialogue with 10 of 11 political parties in the parliament for this consistent political support.

One of the most comprehensive Organic Action Plans for Denmark, and winner of a 2018 Future Policy Award, was endorsed in 2015. It emphasizes growing overall market demand rather than only funding farmers to convert to organic. The Danish government defined six key priorities, reflected in the action plan:

- An increased export effort: stepping up its support to increase exports of Danish organic products;
- Let's go organic: promoting domestic demand for organic products;
- Working together for more organics: bringing stakeholders together for a joint movement for more organic production;

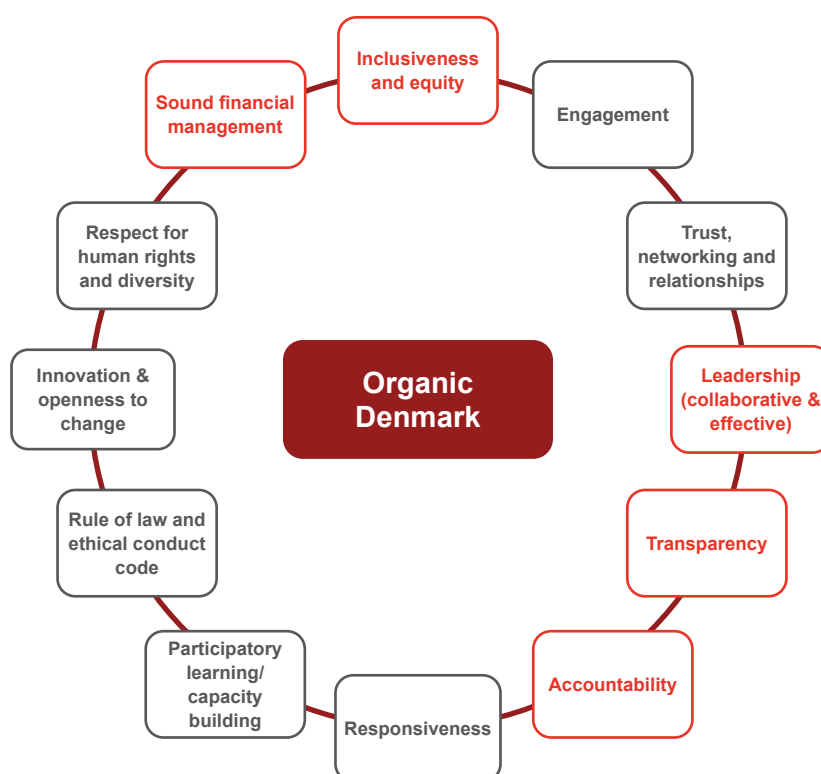


Figure 40. Good governance principles practised by Organic Denmark (in red)



- Developing the organic business sector: supporting the organic sector with resources for the development of know-how and investment in new technologies;
- More and greener organic producers: promoting the development of alternative forms of land use and production systems;
- More resilient organic production: facilitating access to green inputs (new types of fertilizers and fodder) for farmers.<sup>66</sup>

The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries collaborated with 200 food stakeholders to develop the Organic Action Plan for Denmark. Interest groups played a key role in prioritizing initiatives. Organic Denmark facilitated and hosted policy sessions for a wide range of stakeholders on different themes, such as supply chain collaboration, market development, product innovation, organic production challenges and potential in relation to climate, nature, animal welfare. Organic Denmark also convened groups of stakeholders to formulate concrete policy recommendations, and a good deal of the final document came from these collaborative efforts. Once the Organic Action Plan for Denmark was in place, Organic Denmark actively mobilized and led a variety of actors to ensure political support for and

public investment in the recommended policies, and emerged as the main catalyst and driver of the adoption of the policies in Denmark.

Organic Denmark is actively involved in the formulation and implementation, including resource mobilization, of many food-related initiatives. It can be credited with positioning the topic of sustainable food in many broad national programmes and strategies. One unique result of this is that organic food policy is deeply embedded in Denmark's broader policies as a tool for rural development, drinking water protection, pesticide control and green growth; it is also taken on board in national, regional and municipal budgets (see Annex 6).

Policy formulation processes have used a variety of methodologies for dialogue and citizen consultations, such as surveys and workshops. These processes have been instrumental in defining priority themes from a holistic and inclusive perspective. The topics prioritized so far relate to food security, environmental degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, local food production, nutrition and health, sustainable diets, food loss and waste, and food safety and quality. Moreover, thanks to the leadership of Organic Denmark, agroecology and sustainable organic food systems are now also a priority in the Danish international development assistance programmes conducted in the Global South.



Image credit: Organic Denmark

<sup>66</sup>[https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/english/SiteCollectionDocuments/Kemi%20og%20foedevarekvalitet/Oekologiplan%20Danmark\\_English\\_Print.pdf](https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/english/SiteCollectionDocuments/Kemi%20og%20foedevarekvalitet/Oekologiplan%20Danmark_English_Print.pdf)



The development of the organic sector in Denmark has been marked by tensions between economic and environmental sustainability principles. Trade-offs have been made through constant and inclusive dialogue and negotiation, always aiming for consensus. In some cases where disagreements have not been resolved, initiatives have not been pursued further.

### **SFS policy implementation**

Just one of Denmark's Organic Action Plans received EUR 267 million in funding from the Rural Development Programme as part of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy to support farmers for the two years it takes to convert to organic. Between 2015 and 2018, another EUR 11 million supported conversion projects for public kitchens and EUR 3.3 million was allocated to fund market development and promotional campaigns. Research has been supported with amounts ranging from EUR 3 million to EUR 7 million annually, with similar funding for free organic certification and inspection of farms, restaurants and companies. Organic Denmark has some leverage regarding the allocation and mobilization of these funds (Walton and Hawkes, 2020).

The Danish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries is responsible for implementing policies related to organic food production. It coordinates with several agencies working in the area of food and agriculture, as well as with the ministries responsible for the environment, health, climate and finance. Additionally, it collaborates closely with Organic Denmark and other stakeholders, including different NGOs, which in Denmark's case have a very strong involvement in the policy implementation processes.

Public procurement is considered essential to providing a market for organics. Municipalities have been at the forefront in this regard, particularly in Copenhagen, where 90 per cent of the food currently prepared and served in public kitchens is organic.

According to Walton and Hawkes (2020), Organic Denmark has played a key role in the implementation of the Organic Action Plan at the market/private sector level by connecting farmers and food companies with supermarkets and other retailers by helping small businesses to work professionally with retail and food services or to make local, direct sales (by helping businesses to develop an organic marketing strategy, hold in-store events or engage in public relations, for example). The SFS MSM also works closely with supermarkets in Denmark at the strategic level and supports them in expanding organic product lines, presenting products more attractively in-store and communicating more effectively about "the why" of organics to consumers. Organic Denmark also provides foreign business partners with an overview of and easy access to all Danish organic products and companies,

and organizes joint marketing and export initiatives, creating better opportunities, especially for smaller companies, which can use a shared marketing platform (Kaad-Hansen, 2019).

The support that Organic Denmark has provided in the implementation of the Organic Action Plan has served as a valuable example and has informed governments, organizations and food retailers in more than 30 countries about organic food policy development and market development (Biovision, 2018).

The policy implementation process is monitored and reviewed in collaboration with different stakeholders, sharing information and lessons learned.

## **1.2.4. Reported achievements and challenges**

### **Achievements**

Organic Denmark has been instrumental in the development and implementation of Danish organic policy and Organic Action Plans at different levels. On the production side, it actively works with producers to expand organic product ranges and quality. Specialists engage with farmers and offer training to local organic producers on how to increase their sales, communications and exports; they work with small and medium-sized enterprises to launch value-added processed organic food (Walton and Hawkes, 2020). Consumer demand for organic food has grown so fast that Denmark currently imports more organic food than it exports. Consequently, farmers' interest in conversion has grown since 2015 and DKK 1.1 billion (EUR 134 million) has been dedicated to organic conversion for the period between 2017 and 2022. The Organic Action Plan has succeeded in doubling the size of organic agricultural areas between 2007 and 2020 (Walton and Hawkes, 2020).

In the stakeholder survey, respondents identified the inclusion of organic products in public kitchens as another concrete achievement. This is due to Organic Denmark's well-coordinated efforts with public authorities, trade unions, food service companies and a large number of people working in public kitchens. To achieve the ambitious goal of making public kitchens 60 per cent organic by 2020, Organic Denmark and partner organizations and advisors developed a strategy supporting the transformation of meal preparation in the kitchens. Investments in education and meal planning, together with advice from kitchen conversion experts, helped public kitchens to make the shift to healthier, climate-friendly and mostly organic food without increasing their operating budgets. For instance, 90 per cent of the food cooked in public kitchens in Copenhagen is organic; this has been

achieved without raising the cost of meals. This was done by reducing waste, reducing meat portions and increasing the purchase of vegetables and plant-based protein alternatives. These public procurement policies have also resulted in healthier food environments in schools and workplaces (Walton and Hawkes, 2020), as well as in hospitals, childcare centres, retirement homes and military barracks. An important aspect of this achievement, identified in the stakeholder survey, is that former “anonymous” public kitchen workers now feel they have become part of the “save the planet” movement. By serving greener, healthier and more climate-friendly food, their work took on a new meaning and they gained a new work identity and pride in their craft. Stakeholders also point to Organic Denmark’s role in creating and promoting the very motivating Organic Cuisine Label for public kitchens, restaurants and canteens that are 30, 60 or 90 per cent organic. This national label is promoted by Organic Denmark, and certified by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration; Organic Denmark and the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration collaborate closely and have joint ownership of the Organic Cuisine Label homepage and educational website.

Finally, another major achievement identified in the stakeholder survey relates to the acquisition of a 13 per cent organic market share in the retail sector. Organic Denmark’s close partnerships with the major retail chains have motivated supermarkets to make strategic commitments to organic food and sales, shifting to organics in order to attract consumers. Organic Denmark’s long-term strategy and role as a catalyst were essential in getting supermarkets to add new organic products to the shelves, in particular by connecting organic producers with retailers, and helping supermarkets to actively promote organics.

According to the stakeholder survey, the three main achievements of the SFS MSM have been the generation of new collaborations and projects (86 per cent of respondents); the information it provides on policies, strategies and programmes (71 per cent); and its advocacy and advice on policy formulation (43 per cent). Most of the stakeholders who participated in the survey indicated that they have obtained several benefits from participating in Organic Denmark. Some noted the importance of being part of the organic stakeholder network and seeing their small or large contribution have a larger ripple effect. Stakeholders have gained valuable insights into market development from the platform, while also being able to contribute to policy development that includes the entire food chain, making it possible for organizations to find their “natural role” in the development of the organic food system.

## Challenges

The three main barriers identified by 43 per cent of the stakeholders are

- Lack of motivation and incentives;
- Lack of budget to encourage member participation;
- Inability to reach agreements in the face of divergent agendas and conflicts of interest.

Some stakeholders identified the lack of long-term commitment as an obstacle to the SFS MSM’s work. They also pointed out constraints imposed by EU legislation on the development of the Danish organic market, which they believe Organic Denmark has not managed to influence in favour of a more dynamic development of organic standards.

Opinions are divided on the response to the disruption caused by COVID-19 to the Danish food system, with 43 per cent of respondents indicating that the platform was not very effective in developing suitable interventions.

## 1.2.5. Conclusion: Drivers of success for Organic Denmark

Denmark has made organic development a cornerstone of its entire food strategy. In addition to the environmental benefits of organic agriculture, organic policies and the Organic Action Plans have also created economic benefits for farmers through the government’s investment in innovation, farm conversion and growing demand for organics among consumers and via public procurement. Organic Denmark’s role as a catalyst in the supermarket sector and the increase in organic food in public kitchens created a pull mechanism for organic products. It also brought health benefits, as evidence shows that kitchens with more organic products serve more fruit and vegetables and less meat (Walton and Hawkes, 2020). Organic Denmark has worked actively with supermarkets and retailers to strengthen critical competencies in the smaller organic companies and to motivate supermarkets to promote organic food (for instance, expanding organic product lines, holding in-store events, introducing price reductions strategically and communicating more effectively with consumers about organic food). Furthermore, Danish organics are a centrepiece in government strategies for growing food diplomacy and international exports (Walton and Hawkes, 2020). Organic Denmark has helped to support international organic trade by providing foreign trading partners with an overview of and easy access to all Danish organic companies and products.



Thirty years on, the results of the Danish approach, based on stakeholder dialogue, collaboration and broad consensus, are conclusive. In 2018, Denmark's Organic Action Plan won silver at the UN's Future Policy Award where the action plan was recognized as an effective and innovative organic policy that contributes to the transition to sustainable food and farming systems.

Organic Denmark's unique success in helping to transform the Danish food system results from a combination of factors. First, according to 86 per cent of the survey respondents, the SFS MSM is composed of a wide range of stakeholders, adequately reflecting the diversity of actors that make up the Danish food system. Second, most respondents (71 per cent) believe that representation is balanced between all stakeholders and a large majority (86 per cent) consider the trust built within the mechanism after many years of networking and collaboration to be a key success factor. Finally, the overall level of involvement of the parties is perceived as high or very high by all the survey respondents, and this engagement is mainly motivated by proudly representing their organization (86 per cent), networking (71 per cent), and learning and advocacy (57 per cent).

Central to Organic Denmark's success has been its ability to generate strong political support for organic food policy. All the stakeholders believe that there is strong political commitment and involvement, reflected in the level of government buy-in, including the support of high-level representatives for Organic Denmark.

More than half of the stakeholders (57 per cent) consider that the code of conduct, the rule of law and the agreed principles of good governance are respected within the mechanism. Along the same lines, all stakeholders consider that the meetings are well organized and that communication is transparent, clear and effective. Accordingly, the majority of formal members actively participate in the work of the SFS MSM, and, according to 86 per cent of respondents, the participatory learning processes in place foster the capacity building of its members.

Organic Denmark's strong leadership has been fundamental to its achievements. All respondents indicated that the leadership is receptive to new ideas and encourages all members to participate. In addition, 86 per cent of respondents stated that the leadership reflects the input of the members in the products generated by the SFS MSM, and actively participates



Image credit: Jakub Kapusnak by Unsplash



in welcoming new members. Finally, the majority of respondents (71 per cent) believe that the leadership shares power in terms of decision-making; has a good mechanism for managing conflicts of interest, resolving disagreements and managing power relations; and provides opportunities for members to build leadership skills within the SFS MSM.

A clear, well-defined strategic vision and a good understanding of the overall political and thematic context are other fundamental determinants of Organic Denmark's success. All respondents find that the SFS MSM has well-defined objectives, plans and strategies. They concur that its policy and advocacy priorities are reflected in its overall strategy, and that it understands the overall policy environment related to these priorities. The majority of respondents (86 per cent) recognize that Organic Denmark articulates its mission, vision and goals to its members; that it has basic knowledge of its policy theme; and that the food systems approach is understood by the majority of its members.

The overall perception of the stakeholders is that Organic Denmark has been effective in incorporating the key topics related to sustainable food systems. The majority of respondents (86 per cent) rate as high or very high the level of inclusion of the environmental sustainability component and the food systems approach in the work of the SFS MSM. They also consider that it properly addresses the nutrition and health needs of the most vulnerable. Additionally, the majority of respondents (71 per cent) believe that the SFS MSM has been effective in fostering inclusive and constructive dialogue and promoting collaborative and coordinated action among all food system stakeholders at the same level.

Looking to the future, Organic Denmark's stakeholders contend that the mechanism should address issues related to sustainable food production (100 per cent), food loss and waste (86 per cent) and climate adaptation (71 per cent).