

Good Practice in NbS Policy Integration in Europe:

Territorial Food Projects (Projets Alimentaire Territoriaux, PAT) to accompany food transition in France

Short description

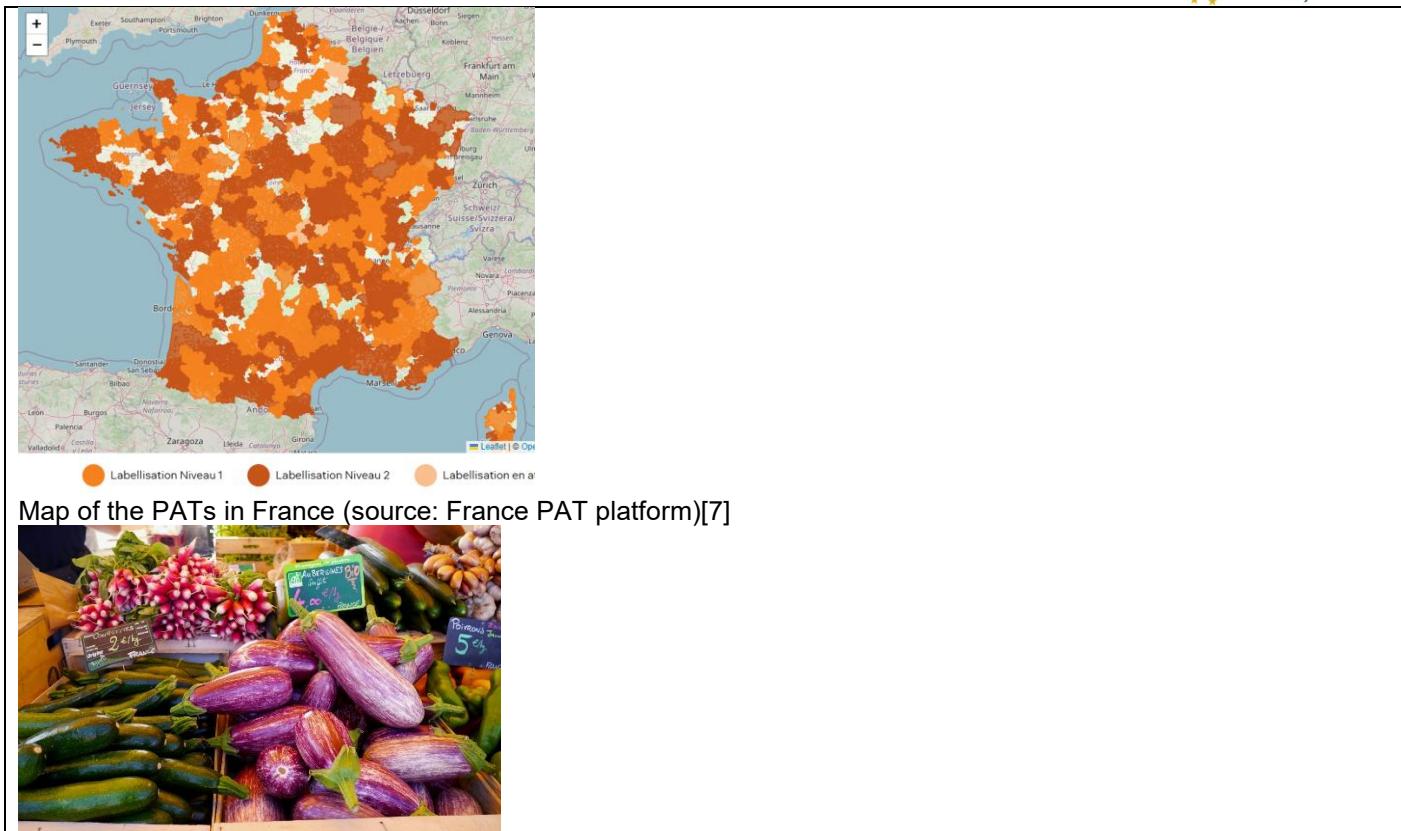
The Territorial Food Projects (PAT) are a French policy instrument created to support the food transition by aligning economic, social, environmental, and public health priorities. Since 2014, PATs have promoted agroecology and organic farming, strengthened local supply chains, and improved access to quality, sustainable, and healthy food, especially for vulnerable populations.

Key messages

- Coherent approach towards food system transition, taking into account social, environmental and economic aspects. Territorial Food Projects aim at creating and supporting the conditions for sustainable food transition, from farm to fork. By encouraging agroecological practices and sustainable land use, PATs support nature-based solutions while building more resilient and sustainable food systems.
- Strong stakeholder engagement with inclusive governance. A central feature of PATs is their commitment to participatory decision-making. To obtain certification, each project must demonstrate meaningful consultation with local stakeholders, including farmers, food businesses, consumers, civil society, and local authorities. Importantly, this engagement continues into the implementation phase, ensuring that diverse voices shape the process and that the resulting strategies reflect local needs and knowledge. This collaborative governance model strengthens trust, capacity, and ownership among all actors involved.
- Successful policy uptake: The success of the PAT initiative is evident in its broad reach and uptake. To date, 448 Territorial Food Projects have been officially certified (207 received level 1 -recognition and 241 received level 2-consolidation), underscoring the policy's relevance and effectiveness. This substantial number of certified projects indicates growing momentum and recognition of PATs as a powerful tool for catalysing sustainable food system transitions at local and regional scales.

PATs propose tailored responses to territorial food transition issues, and NbS could be more strongly embedded in the action plans. In the certification framework, the use of NbS could become a criterion for recognition. Currently, the criteria for the environmental dimension are quite broad, spanning food waste, climate, and biodiversity, and implementation depends on the specific indicators chosen under each thematic area. Similarly, the criteria for the food economy dimension cover a broad range of aspects, from strengthening local supply chains to encouraging changes in farming and processing practices. Without more targeted guidance or weighting of these criteria, there is a risk that some essential levers for food system transformation (such as NbS or local economic resilience) may be overlooked.

Images



Source: unsplash

Type of policy instrument	Location and Scale
Policy category Regulatory instruments Planning instruments	Type of instrument and activity National regulation creating PATs Action plans and Strategies that accompany the implementation of projects
	As of september 2025, 448 Territorial Food Projects have been recognised, with at least one in each French department.

Description of good practice

The Territorial Food Projects (PAT) are a French policy instrument created to support the food transition by aligning economic, social, environmental, and public health priorities [14]. Since 2014, PATs have promoted agroecology and organic farming, strengthened local supply chains, and improved access to quality, sustainable, and healthy food, especially for vulnerable populations.

To be officially recognised and funded, PATs must now meet a set of criteria that have evolved over time. Notably, for the 2023–2024 call for projects, the Climate and Resilience Law introduced stronger environmental requirements [1]. PATs must now demonstrate how they integrate climate change considerations across the food system, including supporting agroecological practices and organic farming. They also foster sustainable dietary changes, such as diversifying protein sources, introducing legumes, promoting seasonal products, and prioritising local and quality supply chains.

In addition, PATs support economic objectives, like preserving agricultural land and reinforcing local value chains, as well as social and educational priorities, making healthy food more accessible and promoting food literacy.

Description of policy target

National Level:

- **Law n° 2014-1170 (Loi d'avenir pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et la forêt):** Legal foundation of PATs (Articles 1 and 39). Article 39 modifies Article L1 (III) of the French Rural and Maritime Fishing Code to introduce and define **Territorial Food Projects (Projets Alimentaires Territoriaux, PAT)** [2], and introduces article L. 111-2-2 of the same code, describing the construction, objectives and governance of these projects.
- Climate and Resilience Law: Law No. 2021-1104 of August 22, 2021 on combating climate change and strengthening resilience to its effects [1]. This law modifies the article L. 111-2-2 of the same code, strengthening the ambition of PATs to promote the economic and environmental resilience of local food chains to ensure healthy, sustainable and accessible food, and to help guarantee national food sovereignty. This law also introduces a national network of PATs. It also introduced the National Strategy for food, nutrition and climate (SNANC, planned for publication in 2025) promoting climate-aligned food policy. The Strategy explicitly defines directions of a sustainable food policy that emits less GHG emissions, respects human health, better protects biodiversity, and promotes the resilience of agricultural systems and territorial food systems. The Strategy allows better integration of climate and environmental criteria in PATs project calls.

PATs are conceived as integrated, place-based strategies for transforming local food systems. They are developed in a participatory manner, bringing together all relevant actors within a given territory, including local authorities, farmers, associations, businesses, and citizens. These stakeholders collectively **carry out a diagnostic of the local agricultural and food context in order to define a shared vision and implement coordinated actions.**

The purpose of these projects is to structure the local agricultural economy and promote territorial food systems based on local consumption, short supply chains, and organic production. By encouraging agroecological practices and sustainable land use, PATs support nature-based solutions while building more resilient and sustainable food systems.

The law frames PATs as political and strategic projects for the future of a territory, closer in meaning to a “vision” than to a set of technical measures. Their legitimacy and credibility are strengthened through formalisation by means of **contractual agreements among the involved partners**. These contracts serve as governance tools, outlining mutual commitments and responsibilities.

PATs must be aligned with the objectives set out in the Regional plans for sustainable agriculture, ensuring coherence with broader regional agricultural policies. Projects that fulfill national criteria may receive formal recognition and use the label “Projet Alimentaire Territorial,” which signals their alignment with national goals and enhances their visibility and access to resources.

A draft SNANC, out for consultation, sets a target of 80% of the territory covered by level 2 PATs.

- **EGAlim Law (2018):** Introduces obligations for collective catering, including reducing food waste and sourcing local/organic food, goals that PATs support. The target of 50% quality-labeled products, including 20% organic in collective catering, acts as a real catalyst for the development of PATs. [3]
- **National Food Programme (PNA),** created in 2010, which offer technical and financial support to PATs. The third plan (PNA3 2019-2024), marks the orientation towards a more systemic approach for PATs, with the integration of social justice aspects. The Plan defined two levels of recognition for PATs: ‘emerging’ PATs (level 1) and ‘established’ PATs (level 2) with established governance and action plan. [4]
- **France Relance Plan (2020-2021):** The covid period marked an intensification of the political and financial support to PATs, and an increased focus on food security and resilience. [5]
- Ecological planning (2024-ongoing) : a system of financial support for the transition to level 2 and the networking of PATs has been implemented in this context. With the programme, 153 level 2 PAT received a total of EUR 13 million (EUR 85 000 on average per project), including 83 which just received level 2 certification [18].

Regional Level:

- Regional support is coordinated through **DRAAFs (Regional Directorates of Agriculture, Food and Forests)**, within the strategic framework of the regional food committees, chaired by the regional Prefects
- PATs align with and can be integrated into **regional and territorial development tools** like:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schéma Régional d'Aménagement, de Développement Durable et d'Égalité des Territoires (SRADDET) : Regional strategic document that defines orientations at territorial level for sustainable transition. The SRADDET oversees other strategic guidance documents such as the SCoT. ○ SCoT (Schémas de Cohérence Territoriale): Strategic land-use planning frameworks. ○ Contrats de réciprocité: Agreements promoting urban-rural cooperation. ○ PRSE (Plan Régional Santé Environnement): Encourages sustainable, healthy food environments. ○ Plans Régionaux d'Agriculture Durable (PRAD) : A planning document that sets out the broad guidelines for agricultural, agri-food, and agro-industrial policy in the region. 	
Network Nature Theme	
Sustainable food Systems	
Policy Good Practice Criteria	
Societal Challenge(s) Addressed and Human Wellbeing Outcomes	Addressing food insecurity, re-localising food supply chains, encouraging the uptake of sustainable farming practices, addressing health issues by encouraging shifts toward healthy dietary habits
Dedicated Budget/Funding Stream	Dedicated public spending – see cost/funding below. If initial funding stream was considered too low for the deployment of PATs, recent project calls increased budget for level 1 and level 2 PATs (around 100k€ for 3 years of support for emerging PAT).
Indicators of Impact and Evaluation Framework	<p>Defining and developing a coherent monitoring and evaluation framework is part of the criteria for recognition as PAT and for receiving funding in operational phase.</p> <p>The research community is closely connected to the development of PATs: in the governance when universities participate in the emergence and the certification of a PAT, in the consultation for the implementation and design of actions, and in the development of tools for diagnosis and monitoring.</p> <p>Researchers have contributed to create platforms for local authorities to establish initial diagnosis and assessments of their food systems (like SIDDT [6], a webplatform with indicators facilitating decision making) or modelisation tools. All related tools and resources are centralised on the national platform 'France PAT' [7] which serves as a one-stop shop for local actors, enhancing consistency and accessibility in monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>At regional level, PATs are increasingly encouraged to develop monitoring frameworks to evaluate the impact of actions implemented [8], with support and capacity building provided by regional authorities.</p>
Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement	<p>Territorial Food Projects (PATs) clearly fulfill this criterion through their foundational requirement of broad, participatory governance. The PAT framework mandates the active involvement of local authorities, either as initiators or formal partners, and the recognition process explicitly requires stakeholder consultation. PATs are defined as collective and concerted initiatives that must engage all relevant actors in the food system (as part of the requirements for recognition), including public institutions, economic players, civil society organisations, and citizens. Regional networks [9] have been created to support the development and implementation of PATs at local level. They create space for connection and knowledge sharing. This participatory approach ensures that agricultural, environmental, social, cultural, health, and educational dimensions are all represented, reflecting the complexity and diversity of territorial food systems. PATs are contributing to breaking silos, creating space for dialogue between actors of the food system. However, experience</p>

	has shown that actors of the transformation and distribution sectors are more difficult to involve.
Consistency within Policy Mix	Territorial Food Projects demonstrate strong consistency with the national policy mix, as they are embedded within a gradually reinforced legal and strategic framework . Initially introduced by the 2014 Law on the Future of Agriculture, PATs have since been supported and structured through successive national strategies, including the Programme National pour l'Alimentation (PNA), the EGALIM laws, and the France Relance recovery plan. More recently, the National Strategy for Food, Nutrition and Climate (SNANC)[10] further solidifies their role in sustainable food policy. Objectives of the strategy have been integrated in the criteria for obtaining the PAT labelling: PATs must be able to prove alignment with the strategy, as the territorial implementation of this strategy. Projects must also be able to prove consistency with regional planning policy documents and strategies. This policy continuity is matched by significant financial commitments, from modest budgets to major allocations under France Relance in 2020-2021 and ecological planning in 2024 and 2025, demonstrating increasing national investment in PATs as multi-dimensional tools for food transition, territorial development, and climate resilience.
Knowledge Development and Transmission	Education aspects are an integral part of the social pillar of Territorial Food Projects. Criteria for the recognition of PATs explicitly require strategies for addressing food education, recognising its role in changing food habits and orienting demand towards more sustainable ways of consuming and producing. The national portal for PATs [7] shares resources, guides, training opportunities and events in relation to all relevant aspects to food transition (stakeholder engagement, administration, governance, transition of agricultural practices, etc.).
Cost/funding	
PATs are funded via project calls, which fund projects via two streams: one dedicated to emerging PATs (through dedicated funds in the National Food Programme, PNA) and one for already established PATs. Budget allocated has been gradually increasing over the years, from an average of 1 million euros per call between 2014 and 2019, to reaching approximately 15 M euros in the 2024 call and 10M€ in the 2025 call [13]. The Covid Recovery Plan (2020-2021) particularly boosted PATs, with an envelope of 85M euros dedicated to PATs. This coincides with the acceleration of their recognition: 70% of the current Projects were certified in 2021, and 93% since that date. Level 2 PATs (projects already in operational phase) have started receiving funding from 2024 [11]. Level 2 PATs can receive 50 000-200 000 EUR per project, covering up to 70% of the total project's costs.	
Success Factors/Uptake/Impact	
<p>The legal creation of the Territorial Food Project (PAT) status in 2014 laid the foundation for their multidimensional role in driving the food transition. PATs were initially conceived as tools addressing environmental and economic challenges, and then gradually integrating social and health aspects of food transition [8]. Notably, support for organic farming was explicitly included in the law. The 2018 EGALIM Law reinforced this ambition, setting the target of 20% organic products in public catering, and positioning PATs as a means to foster more sustainable agricultural practices, including agroecology. PATs must integrate at least one indicator in relation to EGALIM law implementation in collective catering to receive labelling.</p> <p>The shift toward ecological objectives gained significant momentum with the 2021 Climate and Resilience Law, which formally integrated PATs into the National Strategy for Food, Nutrition and Climate (SNANC). This recognition highlighted their systemic role in transitioning toward sustainable and climate-resilient food systems. Since 2024, PATs applying for advanced (Level 2) certification must define measurable indicators aligned with SNANC targets, further anchoring ecological and climate-related objectives in their design. In particular, projects must define at least one criteria (a t+5 year target for associated indicator must be defined, with annual reporting) per thematic objective of the strategy [12]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social justice, in particular combatting food insecurity 	

- **Environment**, including food waste and resources preservation (biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation). Indicators relevant to agroecology and organic agriculture include: Number of PAT partner organisations in the field of biodiversity preservation; Number of actions carried out for the protection of water resources and their quality; Number of professionals made aware of climate change mitigation issues, biodiversity and/or resource preservation.
- **Food economy**, including support to local supply chains and to agricultural practices transition. Indicators relevant to agroecology and organic agriculture include: Proportion of utilized agricultural area (UAA) cultivated organically in the territory; Proportion of agricultural operators engaged in a sustainable and/or quality production process (SIQO including organic), among those who have been made aware of the issue.
- **Collective catering**, with sustainable sourcing of products, in accordance with Egalim law.
- **Food literacy**
- **Health and nutrition**
- **Land ownership and urban planning**

Level 1 PAT just have to identify one or more indicator per thematic objective (without target or reporting obligation).

At the national level, this evolution is reflected in the governance of PATs, led by the Ministries of Agriculture (MASA), and jointly overseen Health and Solidarity (MTSS), and Ecological Transition (MTECT), including with the support of the national agency for ecological transition (ADEME). Certification requires that at least one local authority is involved in leading the project, ensuring alignment with regional policies and facilitating a place-based, systemic approach to food transition.

PATs are particularly relevant as tools for scaling up NbS, especially agroecology and organic agriculture, because they **integrate ecological transition with strong social priorities**. They support the development of local supply chains, promote fair access to healthy and sustainable food, and actively contribute to social inclusion and the fight against food insecurity. Their cross-sectoral governance, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and alignment with national and EU policies allow them to bridge the gap between actors of the food chain, facilitating dialogue and sharing of good practices. Inclusive stakeholder engagement, the creation of dialogue opportunities on sustainable agriculture and food systems, can be the first step towards a change of agricultural practices [8].

The institutional recognition of PATs and recent funding stability have further supported long-term impacts and integration into broader climate adaptation strategies.

The PAT of Mouans-Sartoux, certified in 2017, is widely recognised as having successfully transitioned towards a more sustainable food system. Key to the transition was the establishment of a municipal agricultural board, which supported the delivery of 100% organic and local food supply to the school's collective catering [16]. The PAT directly supported the establishment of local farmers and worked on the development of the organic supply chain, while ensuring accessibility to the most economically vulnerable. The direct involvement of the local population and education activities contributed to change dietary habits. As a result, a recent analysis showed that most interrogated citizens had modified their habits by the influence of the PAT.

Barriers and Challenges

The promotion of the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices like agroecology and organic agriculture is not always the most prominent aspect that PAT decide to implement. In particular, organic agriculture is not consensual among most local officials, which tend to orient solutions towards lower hanging fruits. However, PATs being a recent policy instrument, it can be considered that the actions implemented are the first steps towards stronger transformation of food systems [8].

The criteria for the certification as Level 2 PAT require the identification of at least one indicator per thematic objective (see above), to be monitored annually with a set target (t+5 years). There is a dedicated objective to the environment, which includes climate, biodiversity and food waste. The broadness of this thematic objective risks undermining the potential of PATs to generate a change of practices at farm level: actions targeted on food waste (e.g indicator 3.1: Number of people made aware of the fight against food waste) might be lower hanging fruits than raising farmers climate literacy or supporting biodiversity (e.g indicator 4.4 Number of actions carried out for the protection of water resources and their quality) [16,17].

Most PATs target in priority the development of local supply chains, without always questioning the production itself. The diagnosis that is carried out in the emergence of a PAT assesses current production and demand on a given territory to adapt agricultural production [15]. It is not always a prospective exercise, which could present scenarios

of diversification for a sustainable food system. More generally, the diversity of the governance creates difficulties to define desired transition paths. This observation might also be a direct consequence of the criteria to be met to reach Level 2 certification. The thematic objective on Food Economy targets both support to local supply chains and transition of practices. Therefore, projects might decide to focus on actions and indicators in relation to local supply chains (e.g indicator 5.3: Number of formalized partnerships with agricultural development structures that support the installation of farmers), a lower hanging fruit than actions and indicators for change of agricultural practices (e.g indicator 5.5: Proportion of utilised agricultural area (UAA) cultivated organically in the territory).

Securing long-term funding for PATs will be a key issue in the years to come.

Potential for Replication/upscaling

Territorial Food Projects have made significant progress, with 207 currently at level 1 and showing strong potential to scale up to level 2. This reflects a growing commitment from local areas to build more sustainable food systems. The success and future development of PATs is, to some extent, dependent on their level of political support. The development of an ambitious food system transformation requires the strong support of local, regional and national policy makers [8].

More Information & Sources

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Contact

Peggy Bucas, Project Manager, Food Policy Division, Draaf Provence Alpes Cotes d'Azur
peggy.bucas@agriculture.gouv.fr