

## 1 Context

The National Food Council (NFC) (1) adopted the [Opinion n°89 "Feedback from the Covid-19 crisis – Period of the first national lockdown in France"](#) on 7 July 2021. It results from the own initiative of the NFC to carry out this feedback and from the reflections of the consultation group, which worked during 7 months. Jean-Luc Angot has been its president and Catherine Darrot acted as moderator of the proceedings.

The main objectives of this group were to:

- **Build on the experiences of the NFC's members during the first French lockdown** in order to draw up a global and shared vision of the crisis and note the positive and negative aspects of the actions that may have been implemented ([see the shared timeline of the crisis](#))
- **Formulate recommendations** in order to move towards a **better resilience of the French food system** by relying in particular on this feedbacks and on the concepts of One Health, food democracy and the right to food, highlighted by the crisis
- **Update the Opinion n°81 "Health-promoting food" of the NFC**, in order to draw lessons from the crisis and formulate/reformulate recommendations
- Conduct this Feedback in conjunction with the implementation of the **Government's Recovery Plan in France**.

## 2 Identified Issues

The analysis of the crisis, as well as the feedbacks from the members of the consultation group, brought to light several major findings. They question the food system's organisation, at the national, European and global scale.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis thus reinforced the need to develop a more systemic vision of food, through the implementation of the One Health approach at all levels of the food chain.

- **The need to develop and implement the One Health approach**

- **The unveiling of strong inequalities concerning access to food that is compatible with a sustainable food system, prompting the development of a reflection on the right to food and food democracy**

The **One Health** approach stresses on the importance of taking into account several levers capable of increasing the capacity of countries to better anticipate and deal with global health crises, in particular:

- the recognition in public policies of the interconnections between human, animal and environmental health
- the collaborative, multisectoral and transdisciplinary approach
- the interaction between local, regional, national and global scales.

At the level of the French food system, the lockdown has led to the development of multi-actor collaboration at all levels of the territory, allowing to cope with the shock and to set up new ways of producing, transforming, distributing, consuming and fight against food insecurity.

At the individual level, studies have highlighted the interdependence of food and health issues, in particular the links between pathologies with strong dietary components and the risks of morbidity and complications associated with Covid-19.

Many citizens have chosen to consume food considered as more sustainable (local supply, short circuits, purchase of fresh, organic and seasonal products, etc.). These changes reveal an increased need, for a part of the population, for more transparency and a desire to reclaim the conditions of production and food. At the same time, territorial, social and economic inequalities in access to food compatible with a sustainable food system have surged, increasing or reinforcing food insecurity situations.

These findings demonstrate that access to food compatible with a sustainable food system is not guaranteed for all on French territory. They call for the development and the implementation of **food democracy and right to food**, in order to promote access to food compatible with a sustainable food system for all.

(1) The NFC is a French independent advisory body, reporting to the French ministers responsible for the environment, health, consumer affairs and agriculture. It is a decision-making support tool, consulted on the definition of public food policies and issues opinions to public decision-makers and the various players in the food sector on subjects such as food quality, consumer information, adaptation of consumer habits to nutritional needs, health protection, access to food, crisis prevention, etc.

- **The need to strengthen food sovereignty in France to ensure food compatible with a sustainable food system**

The crisis revealed the weaknesses of the French food chain: dependence on foreign agricultural workforce, lack of food autonomy in some territories, difficulties of some sectors of activities in selling stocks, etc. Despite these disturbances, supplies were maintained throughout the country.

To meet the increased demand for local / French products and to allow actors in the food chain to better adapt to the context of the crisis, it seems necessary to develop food sovereignty in France.



### To sum up

The Covid-19 crisis highlighted the **risks, inequalities and weaknesses of the French and global food systems**, but also the **adaptive capacity** of the actors of the food chain. It allowed to shed light on **alternative systems** capable of ensuring the continuity of supply in the territory. These transformations reinforce the need to re-question the functioning of the food system in the light of the **One Health** approach and the notions of **right to food** and **food democracy**, in order to develop modes of production, distribution, transformation and consumption more sustainable and resilient.

### 3 What is a sustainable food system?



#### Common shared objective

The NFC highlights the need to develop access to food that is compatible with a sustainable food system. Opinion n°89 thus defines the notion of "sustainable food system" and the recommendations made aim at achieving this objective.

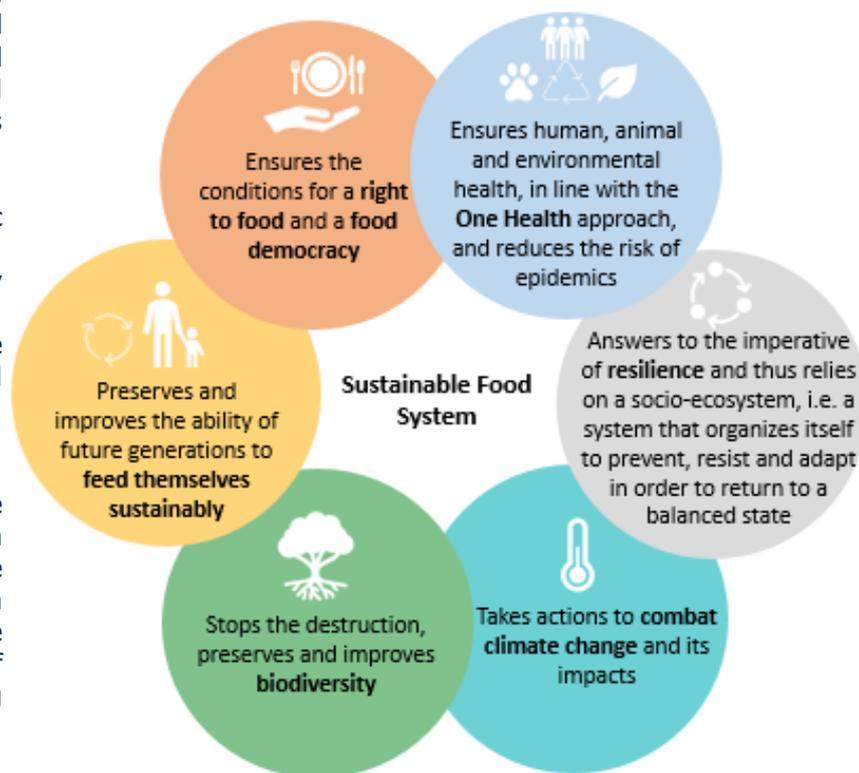
According to the [FAO definition](#), a **sustainable food system** "is a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.

This means that:

- It is profitable throughout (economic sustainability);
- It has broad-based benefits for society (social sustainability); and
- It has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment (environmental sustainability)."

The consultation group wished to propose indicators that could be used to ensure that a decision does indeed promote the sustainability of the food system. The term "sustainable food system" is favoured by the consultation group because of the context of the crisis and because of the encompassing nature of the concept of sustainability.

Indicators ensuring the sustainability of food systems



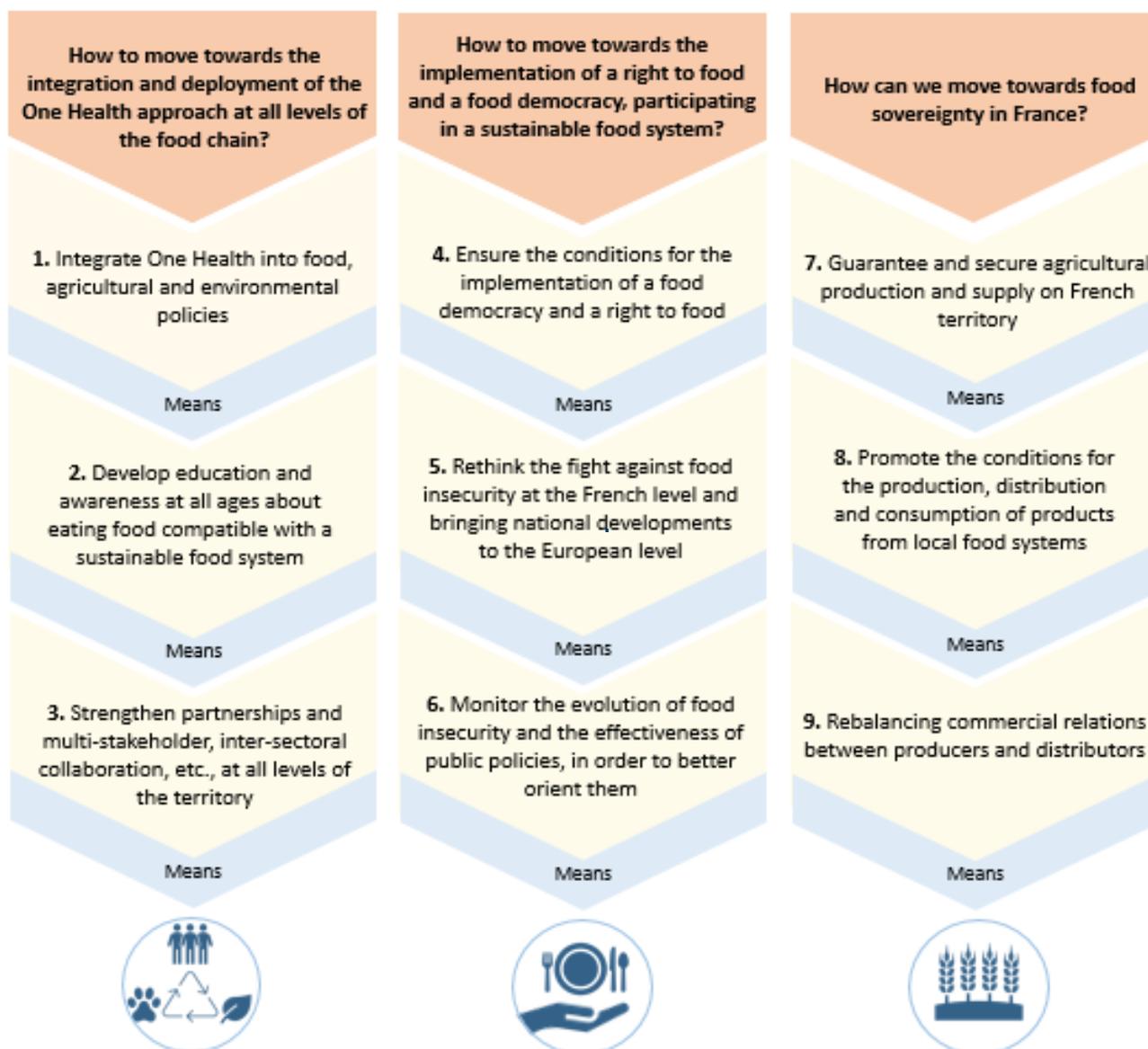
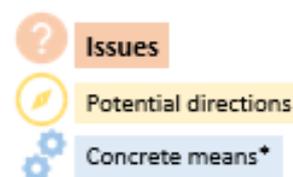
### 4 NFC's recommendations to move towards systemic evolution and a better response of the food system to crises

The NFC propose recommendations called for by the crisis, which must be implemented in the medium / long term. They aim to increase the sustainability and resilience of the system in the face of this type of event, by **responding to 3 priority issues**, highlighted by the analysis of the impacts of the crisis. The NFC then proposes potential **directions** to respond to them, along with **concrete means of action** to implement them.



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#### Recommendations to move towards systemic evolution



\* The concrete means are detailed in opinion 89.

The NFC also proposes **concrete actions** based on feedbacks from members of the consultation group, aiming **to secure the food chain** from upstream (supply, field labor, etc.) to downstream (consumer food safety), in crisis situations.

From the perspective of operational risk management with potential to disrupt the entire food chain, they are intended to be implemented mostly in the short term in response to the occurrence of a crisis, to enable the food system to better cope with this type of event.



Operational /  
short term

2

### Recommendations for better crisis management

8 courses of action for the food system to better respond to crises and/or lockdown situations



#### 4 courses of action for the actors of the food chain to better adapt in times of crisis

1. Improving knowledge of the different distribution and supply systems.
2. Adapting the distribution system to emergency situations, to ensure access to sustainable food for all in times of crisis.
3. Adapting the food aid system to an emergency situation.
4. Adapting the collective and commercial catering sector to an emergency situation to give everyone access to sustainable food in times of crisis.



#### 2 courses of action for better securing logistics at all levels of the food chain

5. Improving the storage and disposal of agricultural production.
6. Securing transport, production and logistics at all levels of the food chain.



#### 2 levers to focus on for a more effective crisis response

7. Collaboration, cooperation and dialogue between actors.
8. The regional approach.

The latest opinions are available on the website: [www.cna-alimentation.fr](http://www.cna-alimentation.fr)



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