

1 Context

The French National Food Council (*Conseil national de l'alimentation* – CNA) adopted [opinion n°91 "Preventing and fighting food insecurity"](#) in **October 2022**. This opinion is the result of a self-referral by the CNA. A consultation group (1), chaired by Mr Franck Le Morvan and moderated by Ms Magali Ramel, worked for a year on its development.

The **mandate** proposed that the consultation group's reflections could be structured around the following axes:

- Dynamic mapping of the populations most at risk of food insecurity (...);
- Improvements to the existing situation in the fight against food insecurity (...);
- The state of play of complementary or alternative solutions to food aid with a view to prevention, autonomy and inclusion;
- Levers for action to ensure access to a sustainable food supply for all;
- The relevance of a basic food foundation or "social security for food" and its content.



Citizen participation scheme

The CNA chose to involve citizens in the preparation of this opinion. This is the second time it has implemented a citizen participation process. In view of the subject matter, particular attention was paid to the **inclusion of people in precarious situations**, in all their diversity. The fight against food insecurity must be based on the findings and recommendations of the people concerned so that societal responses reflect their expectations and needs.

Two key tools were mobilised: **67 self-supporting debates organised across a wide variety of French territories** (including 8 in the French Overseas Territories), bringing together 1,098 people, and **a citizen panel made up of 18 people**, including 10 in a precarious situation (2). The same question was asked of all participants in this process, namely **what needs to be done to ensure that everyone has dignified access to sufficient, quality food?**

The minutes from the 67 self-supporting debates and the opinion of the citizens' panel (24 proposals and 2 appeal messages) were presented to the consultation group. This participatory approach made it possible to broaden this opinion in its **findings and challenges** section and in the **recommendations** for public and private **decision-makers**.

2 Findings and issues

The discussions within the consultation group, supported by experts, the citizen participation process and the analysis of scientific literature, revealed four series of findings and issues.

1. The phenomenon of food insecurity is massive but not completely understood and is aggravated by crises

There is no definitive measurement of food insecurity in France. The data associated with the measurement of poverty or from food aid make it possible to consider the subject without being able to quantify it precisely. The number of people affected was already estimated at 8 million in 2014-2015. This has been exacerbated by the health crisis (registrations with approved food aid associations increased from 5.5 million to 7 million between 2018 and 2020). It is likely to be exacerbated further with the current increase in food prices.

The **need for a more precise and comprehensive**

approach led to the setting up of a working group within Cocolupa (3).

The CNA consultation group has therefore chosen not to go any further with population mapping but considers that further studies on this subject are essential. These studies should not be limited to requests for food aid only: **food insecurity is multidimensional** because it affects different aspects of people's lives (material, economic, identity, social and political); **it is only one facet of poverty** which results from the combination of several insecurities in terms of employment, energy or housing.

(1) The list of members of the consultation group is provided in the opinion (see Annex 3).

(2) The [minutes](#) of the self-reported debates and the [opinion of the citizen](#)

[panel](#) are on the CNA website.

(3) The French Coordination Committee for the Fight against Food Poverty.

2. Public policies to prevent and combat food insecurity are structurally focused on food aid and do not address all the issues of food insecurity

Before the health crisis, the fight against food insecurity mobilised public funding to the tune of **700 million euros per year** (including 400 million in tax aid), to which should be added the value of voluntary activities (500 million) and the net annual donations to food aid from companies and individuals (280 million). Public funding has been temporarily increased to 1 billion in 2021.

At the local level, the **municipal or inter-municipal social action centres (CCAS/CIAS) play an important role, but encounter difficulties in identifying the people concerned.** A **coordinated territorial approach** therefore seems essential in this respect.

Food aid (1) accounts for most of the resources allocated directly or indirectly by **the State or the European Union** to the fight against food insecurity. It provides food and support. However, it has **intrinsic limitations for people** in terms of eligibility, accessibility, reception, quality and suitability of the food distributed. Its impact is poorly measured.

As it did not have access to the administrative work on the **sustainable food voucher project**, the consultation group limited itself to a SWOT analysis (2), which highlights the difficulty of defining the contours of such a scheme and a questioning of its long-term scope, beyond a transitory use to cope with the health crisis.

3. Complementary or alternative initiatives to food aid are developing and need to be better identified, coordinated and supported

These initiatives **take many forms and are incompletely recorded**: thematic workshops, solidarity grocery shops, purchasing groups, shared gardens, social restaurants, etc. Thus, third-party food outlets try to breathe life into the idea of food democracy by combining different issues (participation of individuals, promoting social diversity,

access to high quality food, etc.).

Their main difficulty is that of **changing scale**, which implies a global vision at the territorial level, for which the territorial food projects are a particularly good instrument.

Collective catering, particularly in schools and universities, and **its financial accessibility** are also essential levers for better preventing and combating food insecurity, provided that situations of non-use and inequality of access in different areas are addressed.

All these initiatives require **sustainable public funding**.

4. The subject of food insecurity requires a systemic approach to the issues

The terms of the legal definition of the fight against food insecurity introduced by the EGALIM law to differentiate it from food aid express ambitious political objectives such as "**access to safe, diversified food of good quality and in sufficient quantity** for people in situations of economic or social vulnerability", "**respect for the principle of the dignity of persons**" and **cooperation between all the stakeholders** (State and public establishments, local authorities, economic stakeholders, associations, CCAS/CIAS, with the involvement of the people concerned).

In order to promote access for all to food that is compatible with a sustainable food system, the **legal and political foundations of the prevention and fight against food insecurity** in France must be extended.

Food insecurity is not just a question of the quality or quantity of food: the **prejudices and stigmatisation suffered by those who suffer from it** must be taken into account. Food insecurity is linked to **poverty but also to the food environment**.

The opinion presents a **SWOT analysis of Social Security for Food**, putting into perspective its objective of universal access to sustainable, quality food in the long term and the multiple issues it raises.

3 Shared objectives

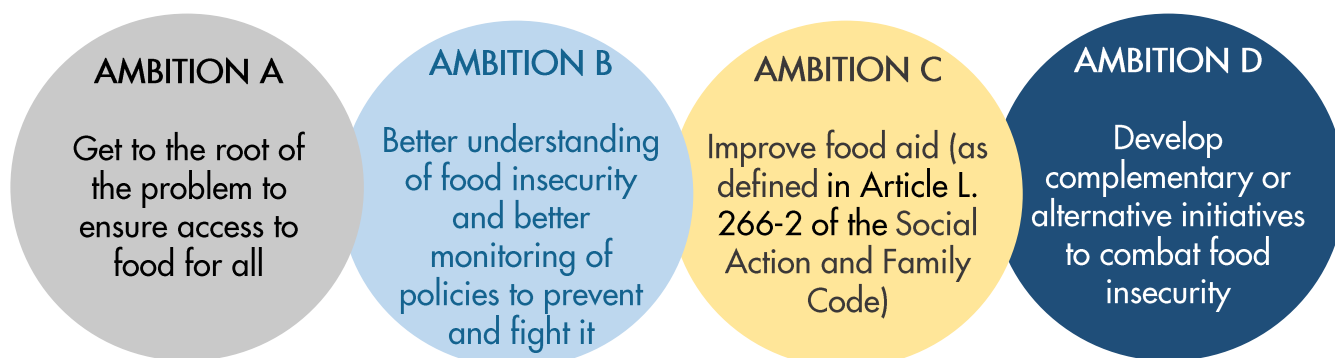
The CNA has identified three main objectives:

- to enable **everybody to have dignified access to sufficient, quality food**
- to **better meet the needs and expectations of people** experiencing food insecurity
- to prevent and combat food insecurity in **line with other general public policy objectives** : the fight against poverty and exclusion, ecological transition, food sovereignty, public health

(1) As defined by Article L. 266-2 of the French Social Action and Family Code

(2) Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

4 Shared ambitions



5 Key recommendations

To meet these four ambitions, the opinion makes **71 recommendations**, including **15 "key" recommendations** (1), split over **17 levers**. In particular, they include 87% of the 24 proposals made by the citizens' panel.

A - Get to the root of the problem to ensure access to food for all

1. Recognise and implement the right to food and moving towards a food democracy

★ **Enshrine the right to food in French and European law and to ensure the conditions for the implementation of a food democracy**, to guarantee everyone access to healthy, safe, dignified and sustainable food (...).

★ **Experiment with the introduction of a social security system for food** within the general social security system (...).

2. Create the conditions for participation and listening to people in precarious situations

★ **Involve citizens**, particularly people in precarious situations, in their diversity, in the development and validation of policies to prevent and combat insecurity, at all territorial levels (...).

3. Change society's view of food insecurity and fight against prejudice and stigmatisation

★ **Contribute to changing the way people in precarious situations are viewed**, in particular by carrying out training and co-training activities and raising awareness; mobilising networks to welcome people without prejudice; promoting places where people can mix

socially and share food; working on the words used in the fight against food insecurity (...).

4. Act on the purchasing power of households

★ Allow everyone access to healthy and sustainable food, **act on the financial resources of households** (salaries, minimum social benefits including for young people, pensions, etc.), including in the context of ambitious job creation policies.

5. Act on the food environment: ensuring an adequate, sustainable and quality food supply

★ **Coordinate sectoral policies to ensure coherence around access to quality food for all** (housing, employment, education, trade, regional planning, agriculture) **and make the territories the lever for this coherence** (...).

★ **Ensure the availability of a quality food supply for all** in all territories, particularly in the Overseas Territories, priority neighbourhoods and rural areas (markets, local shops, etc.) (...).

★ **Recognise an agri-food exception at European and French level**, particularly in the context of trade, in order to avoid speculation on agricultural raw materials at a global level.

(1) Members of the CNA have expressed dissenting positions or reservations on some of these recommendations. These have been developed in the table of recommendations from page 57 onwards of Opinion 91.

B - Better understanding of food insecurity and better monitoring of policies to prevent and combat it

1. Diagnosis : Improve the identification and monitoring of people suffering from food insecurity

★ Improve knowledge of food insecurity situations in France by:

- Continue the analysis of the diets of people suffering from food insecurity in the population;
- Continue the analysis of the diet of food aid users and the work undertaken by the Ministry of Health's Directorate of Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics (DREES), with the participation of the associations concerned and people who use food aid.
- Conduct a study to better understand the micro-economics of the budgets of households experiencing poverty (...).

★ Encourage local authorities to set up networks at territorial level, and in the first instance in cities, to develop their actions to identify people suffering from food insecurity (...).

★ Rely on outreach initiatives (itinerant points, social action "outside the walls", partnerships between universities and student associations) and those that promote social cohesion (shared gardens, solidarity canteens that are open to all and complementary to the distribution of foodstuffs) that make it possible to identify people in a situation of food insecurity and non-use of food aid. Include citizen participation (...).

2. Better monitoring and assessment of food poverty schemes in relation to needs

C - Improve food aid as defined in Article L. 266-2 of the Social Action and Family Code ("provision of foodstuffs to persons in a situation of economic or social vulnerability, accompanied by the offer of support. ")

1. Improve access to food aid

★ Strengthen information on access to people's rights in order to better combat the non-use of social rights.

2. Improve reception

3. Improve support

4. Strengthen stakeholder coordination

★ Improve the coordination of food aid stakeholders at all levels (local, national, European) (...). Mobilise and perpetuate the funds and mechanisms of the poverty strategy (...) to facilitate the implementation of this measure.

5. Ensure the quality of the food distributed

6. Adjust the funding of food aid structures

★ Increase state aid so that part of the food aid comes from local producers practising sustainable agriculture, with the aim of improving the quality, diversity and sustainability of food products for people in precarious situations, and of paying French producers a decent wage and promoting French food sovereignty.

D. Develop complementary or alternative initiatives to food aid

1. Support new food solidarity actions

2. Develop territorial and multi-partner coordination in the fight against food insecurity

3. Strengthen the role of collective catering

4. Create permanent dedicated funds to support these schemes

★ Create a permanent fund to support food solidarity initiatives open to all , aiming to provide access to sustainable, quality food; part of an emancipatory dynamic through extensive investment in programmes to share knowledge on food; providing convivial moments and spaces, which contribute to people being stakeholders in the project.