

How Ede Municipality Developed a Tool to Monitor Improvement of the Local Food System

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Screenshot of part of the general municipal dashboard (top right corner gives access to the section on Food).

Ede, a municipality (120,000 inhabitants) in the Netherlands, has an ambition: healthy and sustainable food for all its citizens. One of the first municipalities in the country to do so, Ede developed an integrated food policy to realise this ambition. Goals were developed within six themes:

- Healthy people
- A healthy food environment
- Sustainable consumption
- Short food chains
- A robust agri-food sector
- An integrated governance approach

The Ede food policy has been implemented for several years now and its first effects can be seen. Whereas only one in every ten primary schools in Ede had a school garden three years ago, now a full third of these schools has one! This is only one result. How can the entire food policy, which aims to improve the entire food system through its six themes, be monitored? And how can these results be made visible to inhabitants, policy makers and partners?

As a solution, the municipality created a tailor-made 'food' dashboard in which it combines information on all selected indicators to monitor progress within the six food policy themes. This dashboard is publicly available on the municipal website (see link below). Some of the information comes directly from existing monitors or surveys, such as the Ede census that assesses variables such as the number of overweight inhabitants. For other indicators new tools were developed, including the food education survey in which schools were asked if they have a school garden. The added

value of the Ede food dashboard is that, by combining both existing and new information on the six themes, it creates a complete overview of the state of the food system and thus the progress of the Ede food policy.

By embedding the food dashboard into the newly developed general municipal dashboard, Ede demonstrates that improving the food system is as important as other municipal issues such as the local economy, infrastructure and housing. Moreover, in putting the new issue of the state of the food system on the municipal agenda, Ede increases support for its food policy by making the impacts measurable.

Collecting the data and updating the general municipal dashboard – in which the food dashboard is embedded – takes about 20 days each year. The costs amount to 13,000 euros per year (this includes the software that the research department needs, regardless of the dashboard, to produce statistics in general). The initial investment for creating the general dashboard was approximately 15,000 euros.

Now that the food dashboard exists, there is room for improvement. Selecting the best indicators, those that are both sound and applicable, and updating them remains a challenge. The number of schoolchildren who work in a school garden might be a good indicator to measure the state of food education in the municipality. But is it a practical indicator? The number of schools with a school garden that children use might be a more useful one after all. To keep improving the quality of the dashboard, Ede is now using the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact indicators, which were developed together with the FAO. Combining this broad, global framework with local practice seems a fruitful way forward!

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Resource

<https://ede.buurtmonitor.nl/dashboard/Speerpuntenmonitor/Food/>