Viikki
FOOD
DESIGN
FACTORY



Laura Forsman
Viikki Food Design Factory Manager
21st of May 2026

Innovation ecosystem for sustainable food systems

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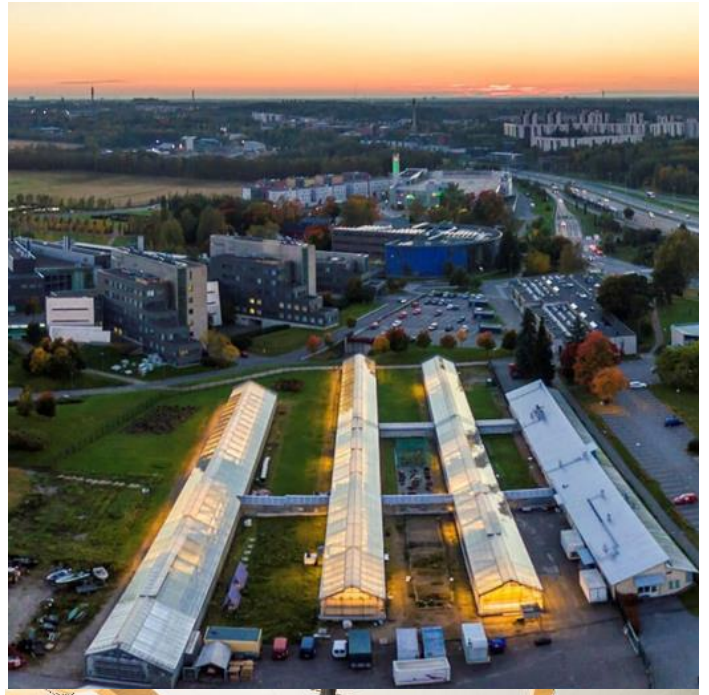
Viikki campus

→ University of Helsinki, Luke, Syke, Finnish Food authority

→ 6000 students, 3000 staff, vast array of research and test infrastructures

→ In-depth knowledge of food, agriculture & food systems

→ Innovation activities & support for the students, researchers and innovators





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The global food system is in an existential crisis



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Opinion
Food

The way we eat is killing us - and the planet

Felicity Lawrence

Mon 28 Jan 2019 06.00 GMT

1,356 1,231

The global food system is causing an ecological and health catastrophe – individual action won't be enough

Illustration: Bill Bragg

The distinguished medical journal The Lancet has issued not one but two apocalyptic warnings about our food in under a month. One of its special commissions reported earlier this month that civilisation itself was at risk from the effects of the current food system on both human health and the Earth's ecosystems. This week comes the next

1. **Produces 25% of greenhouse gas emissions**
2. **Responsible for 70% of biodiversity loss**
3. **Consumes 70% of the available fresh water**
4. **Causes overweight for 40% of the population and reduced food security and hunger for 30% of the population**
5. **The largest employer of all sectors (1.3 billion people), whose jobs are the 2nd worst-paid, most dangerous, and most insecure (only the mining sector ranks worse)**



Viikki FOOD DESIGN FACTORY

We nurture, nourish and nudge out NEW INNOVATIONS and INNOVATORS FOR TRANSFORMING THE FOOD SYSTEM



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Viikki FOOD DESIGN FACTORY

Innovation ecosystem orchestrator

1. **Combining** knowledge of **science-based food system transformation** with **commercialization and business development expertise** for delivering strong sustainability

2. **Facilitator for co-creation and co-design** of transformative food system innovations

3. **A network of over 150 agrifood actors** in Finland & abroad

Funders 2026:

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Helsinki Helsingfors

Co-funded by the European Union

BUSINESS FINLAND

eit Food ACCELERATOR NETWORK

Funded by the European Union



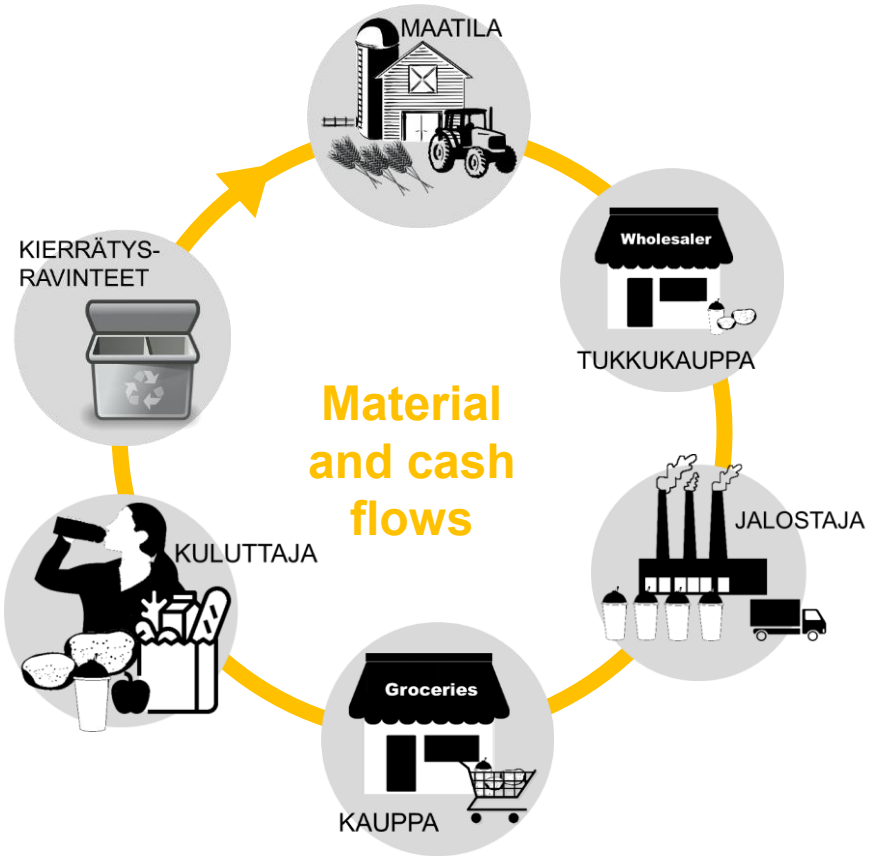
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From the design of food products and services to the design of sustainable food systems through new food products, service innovations and business models

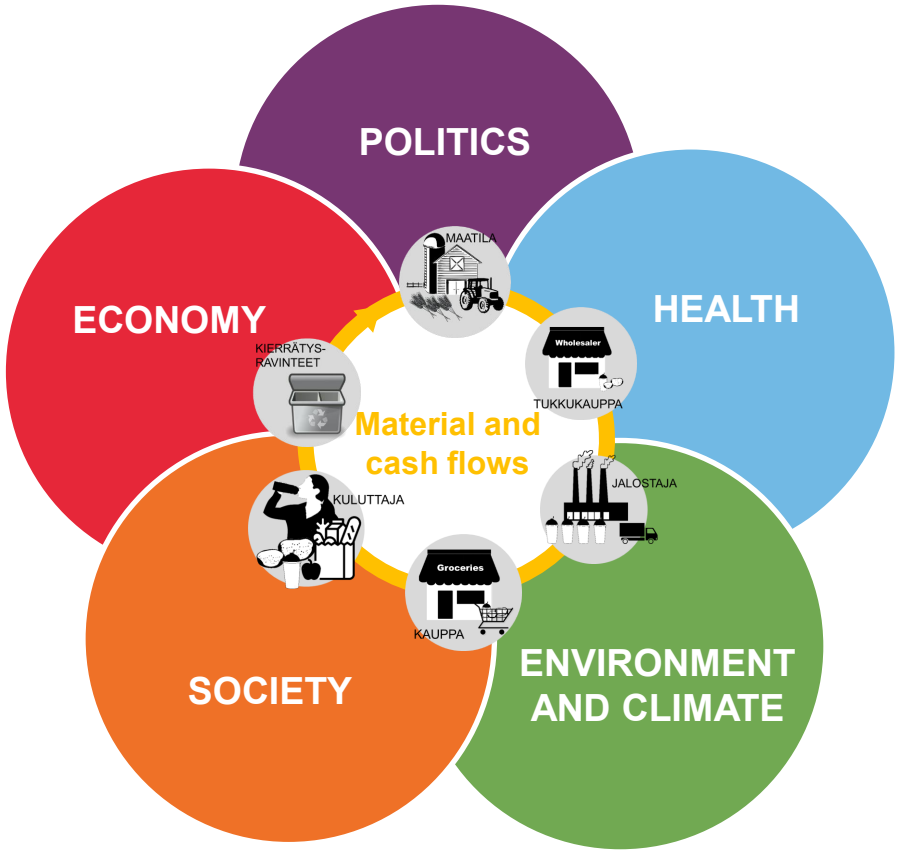
Vaarst, M., Escudero, A. G., Chappell, M. J., Brinkley, C., Nijbroek, R., Arraes, N. A. M., ... & Halberg, N. (2018). Exploring the concept of agroecological food systems in a city-region context. Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems 42 (6), 686–711.

From food chain thinking to food systems thinking

FOOD CHAIN



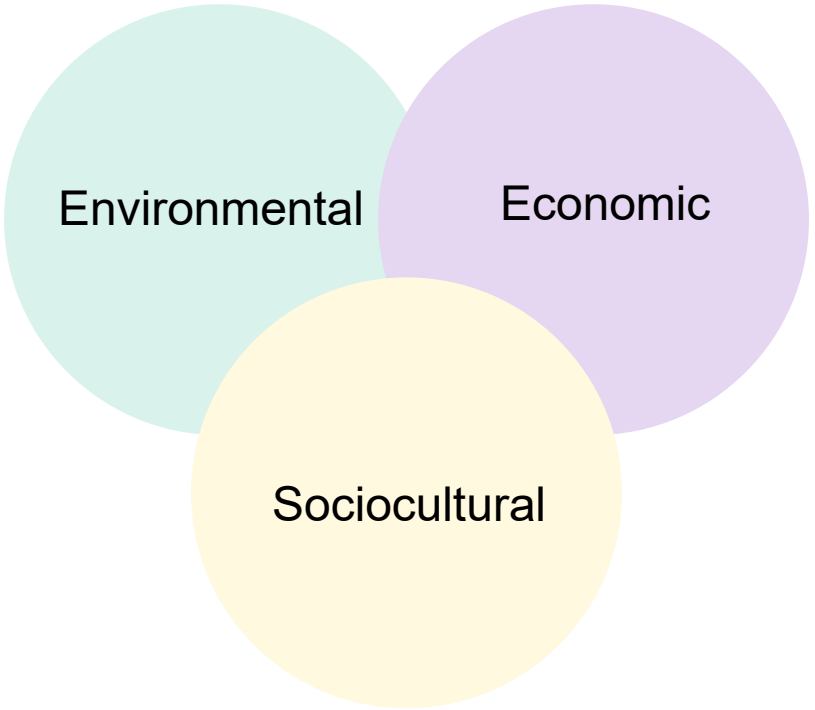
FOOD SYSTEM(S)



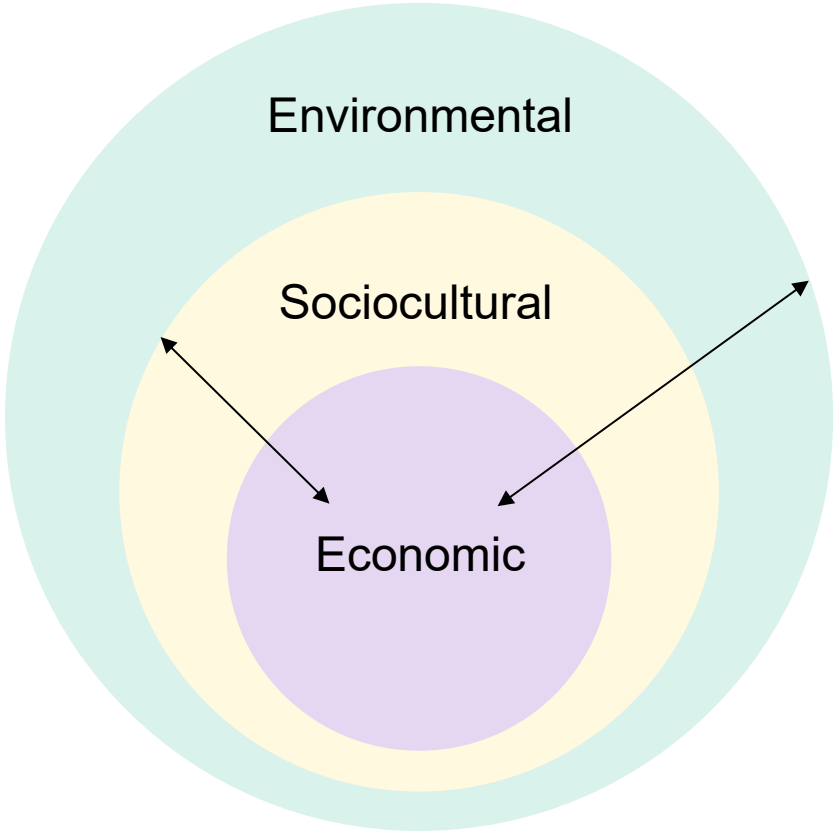
Adapted from :
https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-019-0019-8

From food chain thinking to food systems thinking and weak sustainability to strong sustainability

Weak sustainability



Strong sustainability



Figures adapted from Liobikine et al. (2019)

Strong sustainability for food systems

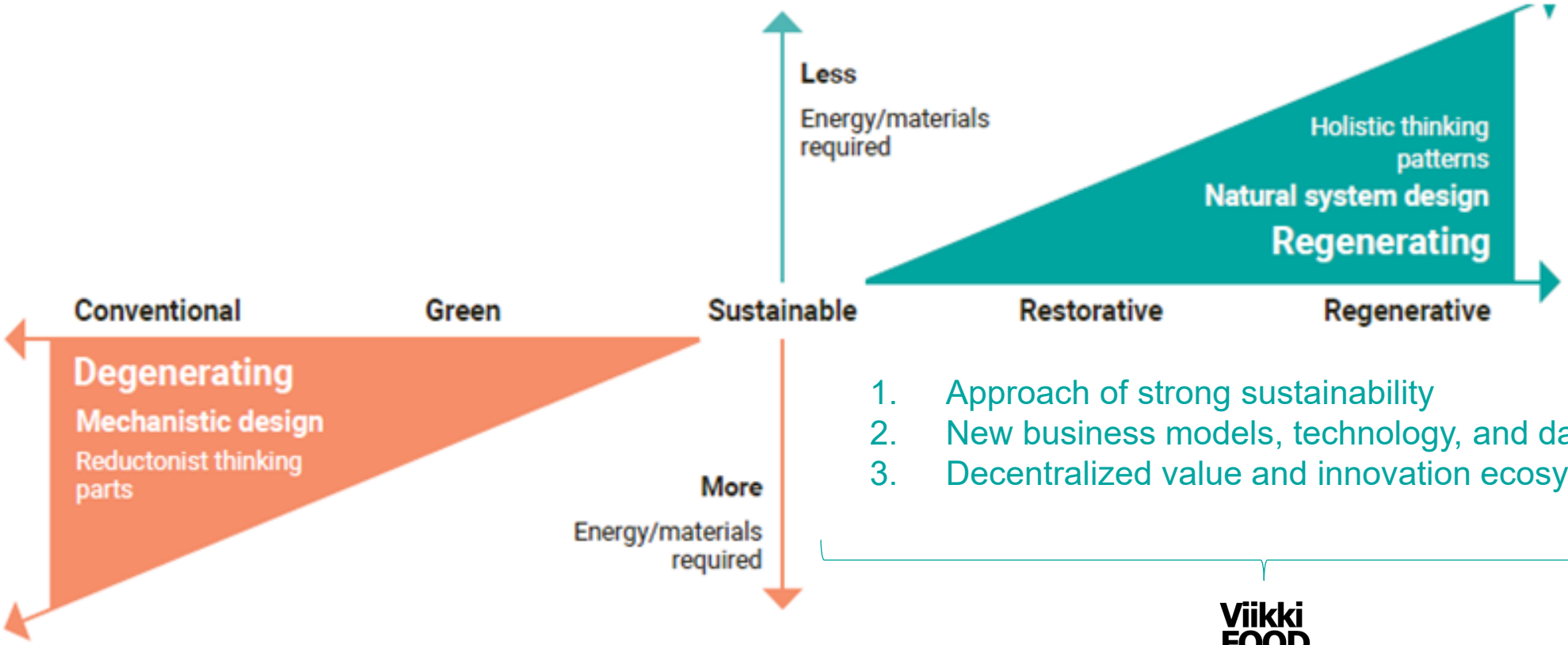
4 SIMULTANEOUS GOALS ON 3 DOMAINS

1. Well-being for the environment and climate
2. Healthy and sustainable nutrition for all
3. Efficient utilization of nutrients and resources through circular economy
4. Well-being for societies through economic and social innovations

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The case for strong sustainability calls for even stronger ecosystem collaboration right now!



1. Approach of strong sustainability
2. New business models, technology, and data
3. Decentralized value and innovation ecosystems

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Pic source: United Nations Environment Programme (2021). The Role of Business in Transforming Food Systems. UNEP.

Viikki Food Design Factory Functions & projects 2026

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM ACTIVITIES

RDI projects

Startup support

Viikki FOOD DESIGN FACTORY

Education collaborations

Guest lectures at
ENT-201 & ENT-202

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Campus innovation infrastructure development

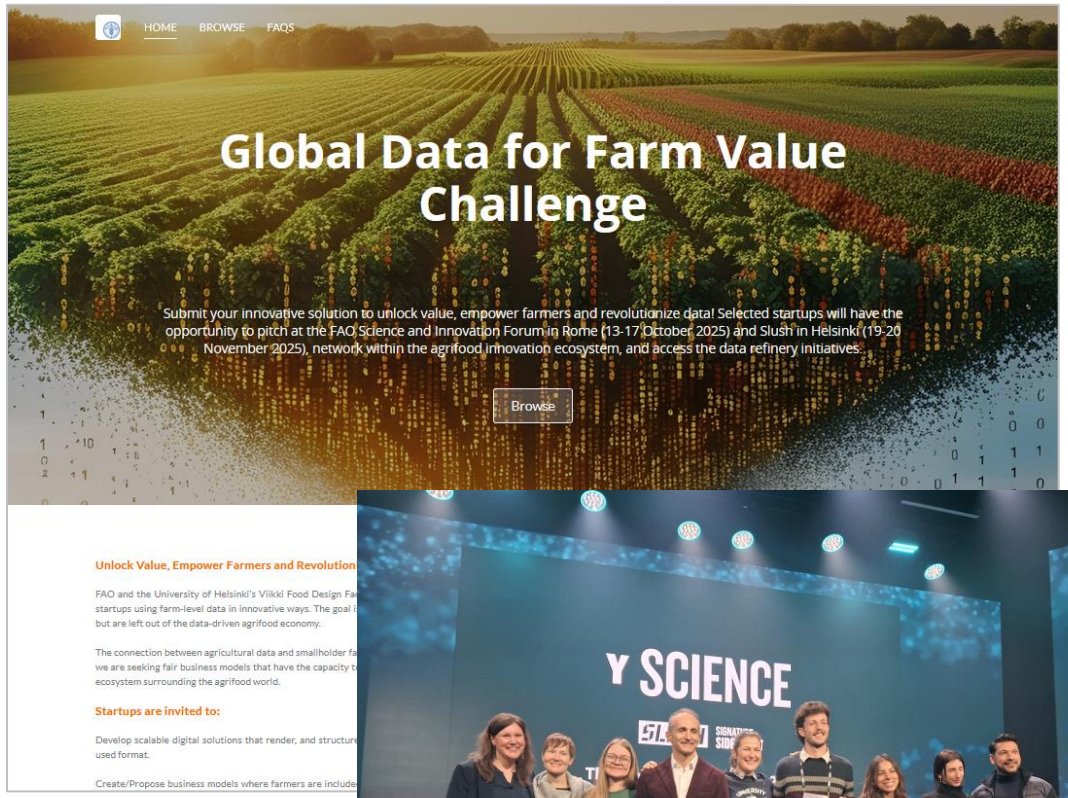
Viikki Innocampus

Ecosystem expansion and internationalization

Viikki Innocampus

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FAO's & VFDF's Data for Farm Value Challenge





Purpose: to identify and showcase the best startups that develop innovative products/services leveraging farm data, with business models that benefit and compensate farmers for the use of their data.

Over 200 applications from 60 countries

Semifinal: **FAO's Science & Innovation forum** in Rome **10/2025**

Final:**Y Science @Slush** in Helsinki **11/2025**

UH's VFDF and the FAO's OIN's shared vision: to establish an international **AgriData Innovation Refinery** in Helsinki, to strengthen the capacity of both Helsinki and Finland in serving as a leading innovation hub for the data economy and sustainable food production, in collaboration with partners such as Canada and Japan.

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FOOD SYSTEMICITY

Programme for business creation to transition into sustainable local food systems in cities and built environments

Co-funded by the European Union

Duration: 3 years, 2023 – 2025 | Lead: University of Helsinki

Decentralized and locally organized food production and distribution for agrifood sustainability and security of supply

New business opportunities for actors in the built environment.

Urban farming



Direct-2-Consumer



Local nutrient recycling



Agency & Community



Programme offers...

- **Business opportunity mapping**
- **Match-making across sectors and actors**
- **Co-development of new solutions**
- **Theme expert mentors**
- **Piloting opportunities**
- **Assessment framework for sustainability**

For...

- **Companies in the real estate & built environment sector**
- **Startups with new solutions for food cultivation and distribution, nutrient recovery and circulation, logistics and energy etc.**
- **City officials & 3rd sector**

Contact: laura.forsman@helsinki.fi

Upcoming in spring & summer 2026: Viikki mushroom upcycling experiment

- **Helsieni:** Mushroom cultivation equipment and knowhow
- **CoolHead Brewery and Taproom:** spaces for mushroom cultivation and utilization of fruiting bodies in taproom's pizzas
- **UH research, Tuula Jyske & Milla Koponen:** Reclaiming of the fungal mycelium for testing as a mycelium composite (part of Luonteva project)
- **Viikki Food Design Factory:** facilitating the co-development of the experiment and recruitment of students as operational force in the form of a project course



EIT Food Accelerator Network Helsinki Hub 2025 & 2026

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CIRCULAR SOLUTIONS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS

- By-Product & Waste Stream Valorisation
- Upcycled Food & Feed Ingredients
- Upstream Process & Feedstock Optimisation
- Circular & Sustainable Food Packaging







New EU Horizon Innovation Action project: Circulandia (starting in summer 2026)

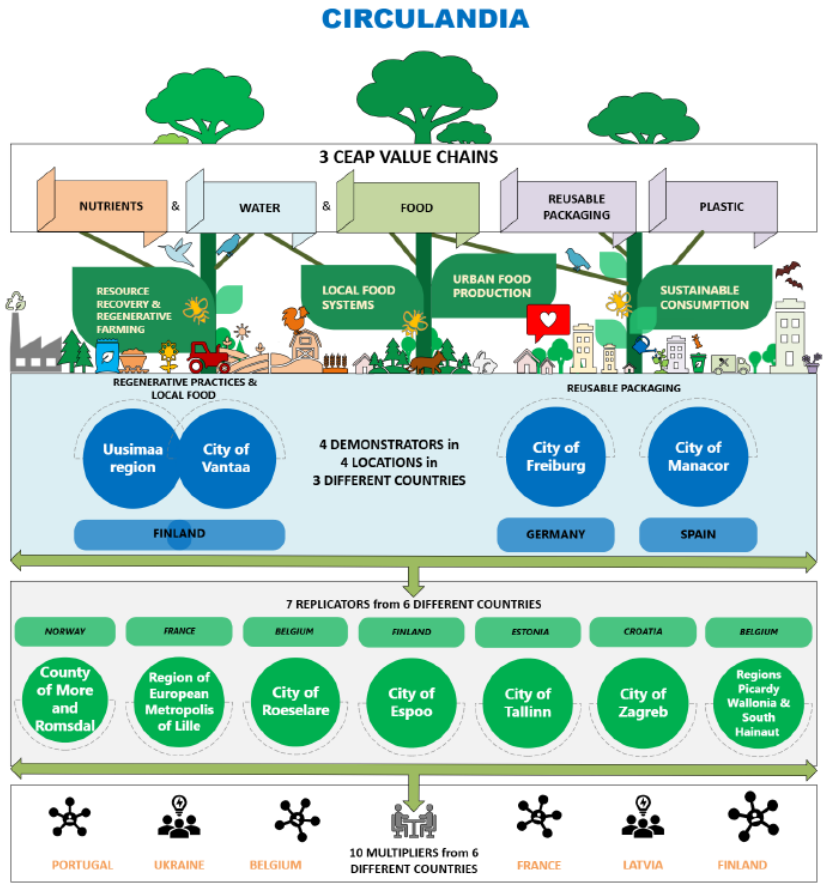


Fig. 2. CIRCULANDIA Concept and structuring of Demonstrators, Replicators and Multipliers

CIRCULANDIA disrupts and transforms the current food systems by fusing regenerative farming, circular nutrients, local food production & consumption, and reusable packaging into holistic urban-rural ecosystem.

CIRCULANDIA takes a holistic approach and aims to create a circular and resilient urban–rural ecosystem that mitigates climate change by integrating three interlinked value chains: regenerative agriculture, local food production and distribution, and reusable takeaway packaging.

VFDF at the University of Helsinki leads CIRCULANDIA's WP4.

WP4 **generates, replicates, and scales models for local food systems via the three main demonstrations**:

(1) Local food hub operations and governance
(2) Public procurement supporting local farmers
(3) Food production & processing in urban environments with related governance models

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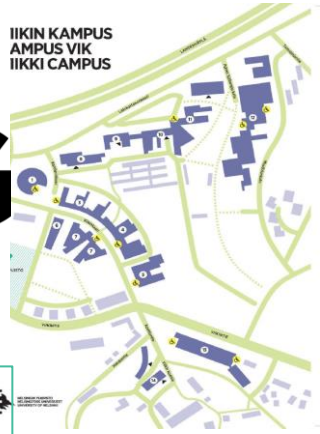
The Viikki experimental environment makes the Viikki campus a unique place- and resident-centered research and testing platform

Viikki people

Companies

Research and education

Viikki LIVING LAB



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Products and services that meet customer needs

Cutting-edge research enabled by unique local engagement

Innovation-minded students and high-quality degrees

07.02.2025 | Laura Forsman

Viikki Food Design Factory team



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Project Assistant

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Project Planner

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EIT FAN Programme Manager

Isa Stucki
Project Planner

Laura Forsman
Ecosystem Lead

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It takes an ecosystem of innovators to transform the food system



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