

# HYB26

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HYB



# If I were Minister of Food & Beverage

Sustainable gastronomy

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*Nico Dingemans, Founder and Managing Director, Hospitality in Health (HIH), lays out a fictional but very concrete National Sustainable Gastronomy Strategy 2026 built around ten "Ps," linking health, environment, innovation, and social impact across the entire food value chain. Framed as a policy letter, it argues that countries must hard-wire sustainable gastronomy into education, procurement, tourism, and measurement systems to turn food into both a wellbeing driver and a national competitive advantage.*

Your Excellency, dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Ministry of Food and Beverage, it is with great pleasure that I present our National Sustainable Gastronomy Strategy 2026, laying the foundation for the following decade. This strategy articulates our national values, vision, and mission for responsible F&B leadership with a comprehensive socioeconomic plan we refer to as the "Ten Ps," served in three courses: Purpose, People, Partnerships, Place, Products, Policies, Pricing, Presentation, Promotion, and Proof.

Our national strategy employs language that resonates with stakeholders across the value chain from farm to fork. This includes farmers, fishermen, shepherds, agrifood producers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, professional conference organizers, destination management companies, trade centers and event venues, festival organizers, home-based businesses, educators, and associations.

## FIRST COURSE

### 1 PURPOSE (OR PROMISE) - OUR NATIONAL VALUES

Our promise to our guests is anchored in four core values:

- **Health Cuisine:** The ingredients used in our menus are nutrient-rich, promoting immune system function and supporting gut and heart health. Our dishes address allergens and rising intolerances, reduce vitamin deficiencies, and include essential amino acids, fatty acids, macro minerals, and trace minerals. We embrace holistic approaches to food that draw from traditions such as Ayurveda, Macrobiotics, Mediterranean cuisine, Traditional Arabic Islamic Medicine (TAIM), Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and ancestral knowledge of our local food customs.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** The Ministry supports producers who prioritize biodiversity, seasonality, soil health, animal welfare, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, sustainable agriculture, organic farming, biodynamic farming, permaculture, and nature-inclusive practices. We emphasize the cultivation of GMO-free and antibiotics-free food products.
- **Responsible Innovation:** We stimulate blue economy principles, circularity, zero-waste practices, traceability, protein transition, food integrity, food technology, future food initiatives, urban and desert farming, regeneration, water efficiency, and renewable energy. We prioritize the elimination of plastic, microplastics, phthalates, bisphenols, and PFAS (forever chemicals) in our food and its packaging. The Ministry discourages the promotion of ultra-processed food and beverages that harm our nation's health profile.

- **Socioeconomic Impact:** The Ministry invests in food security, food sovereignty, indigenous food cultures, heritage preservation, rural development, agricultural inclusion, local communities, gender equality, generational succession, reducing import dependency, and shortening value chains. Our national food campaigns align with Fair Food principles, Slow Food values, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## THE CHALLENGES

The United Nations defines sustainable gastronomy as "cuisine that takes into account where the ingredients are from, how the food is grown, and how it gets to our markets and eventually to our plates." While it promotes best practices across the entire value chain, it also presents significant challenges. Its cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary nature makes sustainable gastronomy increasingly complex and fluid, complicating efforts to measure and assess compliance.

To succeed, F&B businesses must integrate sustainable systems throughout their operations strategy, encompassing Supply Chain Management, HR, IT, Administration, Assets, Marketing Communications, KPIs, and bonus structures to incentivize team members at all levels. Embracing this seismic shift is essential for policymakers, operators, and educators alike. Cultivating a nationwide culture of sustainable gastronomy should be the foundation of F&B concept design and operations, embedded within our procurement systems and standardized in our service promises and ROI vocabularies.

However, the biggest gap is the lack of a comprehensive multi-metric system to measure sustainable gastronomy across the entire value chain. Currently, there is no AI, smart technology, certification body, or auditing method that captures all the complexities of sustainable gastronomy in a reliable dashboard that can answer the question on both national and international levels: "What exactly are we eating, and how sustainable are our menus?"

We continue to collaborate with certifications, awards, stars, and programs that measure aspects of sustainability in kitchens and restaurants. Nonetheless, many of these programs tend to focus on specific topics, such as food waste, local sourcing, zero plastic, or protein transition. We recognize that overreliance on these programs can lead to narrow or misleading claims and may even contribute to green washing, blue washing, and social washing.

In partnership with the Ministry of Digital Economy, we are working on a comprehensive multi-metric solution that integrates blockchain and AI to monitor, benchmark, and rank sustainable gastronomy. Until this solution is in place, we will utilize best practices to enhance our national database while guiding our stakeholders through the complexities of sustainable gastronomy. Our collaborative approach helps the sector stay ahead of the curve, reduce risk, save time and costs, and improve our national F&B green goals, and ESG monitoring.

## MAIN COURSE

### 2 PEOPLE

Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. The Ministry collaborates with culinary academies and hotel schools to integrate sustainable gastronomy and responsible F&B management into the national curriculum. Our educational materials reconnect the industry with farmers, artisanal producers, and ancestral knowledge about food, health, and culture. Educating and engaging our future GMs, Executive Chefs, F&B Directors, Marketing Directors, and Procurement Officers is key to driving sustainable transformation. Rooted in culture and shared values, the Ministry's people philosophy for both youth and adult education is based on 4Cs: Cultural Confidence, Connectivity, Charm, and Competence.

### 3 PARTNERSHIPS – OUR ECOSYSTEM

The Ministry aligned its strategy with international manifestos and guidelines, including the [Lima Declaration](#), [Slow Food](#), [UN Tourism Guidelines for the Development of Gastronomy](#), [Tourism](#), [Sustainable Restaurant Association](#), [World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance](#), and various other global sustainability initiatives. Chaired by our Ministry, the National Sustainable Gastronomy Alliance (NSGA) is a new inter-governmental body involving the Ministries of Agriculture, Tourism, Environment, Health, and Trade.

The NSGA also includes public-private partnerships with educators, industry associations, and trade show organizers related to hospitality and food. Our ecosystem of knowledge partners highlights the holistic and inclusive nature of our strategy. This includes anthropologists, ethnologists, archaeologists, biologists, apiarists, mycologists, viticulturists, zoologists, botanists, herbalists, nutritionists, ecologists, food activists, curators, historians, and foragers.

### 4 PLACE

Our sense of place is reflected in our national culinary identity, which manifests on three levels: 1. Physically: through our F&B venues across the country, 2. Internationally: by exporting our food culture through trade missions & trade shows and establishing a national culinary equipe for international events, and 3. Digitally: through storytelling on social media and the creation of a national e-library for culinary heritage and innovation.

### 5 PRODUCTS

The future is local, biodiverse, and inclusive. We incentivize F&B businesses to prioritize seasonal and locally sourced produce on their menus and in their banqueting sales kits. The Ministry fosters procurement agreements with cooperatives and farmers' markets to prevent price-dumping and reduce food loss in the agricultural sector due to oversupply and surplus harvesting. Our Hotel, Restaurant, and Chef Associations are committed to visiting food festivals, tastings, seasonal harvests, and fresh markets each season. Additionally, we created a procurement roadmap aimed at increasing local product purchasing by 10% annually while decreasing imports. We also invest in hackathons, food labs, and incubator programs for local innovators and start-ups that offer solutions to combat the effects of climate change in agriculture, ensure food security, and revitalize local food systems.

### 6 PROFIT & PRICING (STRATEGY)

Guests are willing to pay for food that does good. The Ministry's renewed value-based approach to Menu Engineering aims to increase average spend while minimizing the potential rise of food costs associated with sustainable gastronomy. In collaboration with our Procurement & Communications Committee - and grounded in the power of storytelling and changing consumer behavior - we support Sustainability Directors and F&B Directors in sharing narratives about sustainable food. The Ministry of F&B emphasizes integrity through traceability to optimize value-based pricing. Additionally, technology-driven zero-waste programs enhance profit margins while reducing food waste.

### 7 POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Government has a responsibility to lead by example. All policies concerning public tenders for events, functions, and food procurement will adhere to the national strategy. Meanwhile, the NSGA, in collaboration with the Hotel and Restaurant Association, is creating a blueprint of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for sustainable gastronomy for the private sector.

## DESSERT

### 8 PRESENTATION

You can learn much about a country through its food. In collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, we apply the [Z Steps method](#) to establish Sustainable Culinary Tourism as a new pillar in the national tourism strategy 2026. The food pillar aligns with the UN Tourism Guidelines for Gastronomy Tourism and is founded on five compelling reasons: shifts in consumer behavior, policy and compliance, multisectoral dynamics, institutional factors, and macroeconomic impacts. Key elements include Farm Hospitality, Agritourism, Wellness, Culinary City Breaks, Oleo Tourism, Wine Tourism, and Ecotourism experiences related to food, farming, marine life, and nature. These experiences involve local communities who are often left out of traditional tourism models.

As we anticipate food-related ESG and CSR criteria for international conferences and events, we recognize the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector as a key stakeholder in our culinary tourism strategy. Our primary goal is to position our country as a leading food destination that meets the ethical F&B expectations of both leisure tourists and business travelers, while preserving a healthy food culture for local residents.

### 9 PROMOTION

The Ministry collaborates with local and international Michelin-starred chefs, as well as leading experts who operate at the forefront of sustainable gastronomy. These champions actively participate in our culinary campaigns, conferences, dinner events, and food tours to promote sustainable practices. Each guest chef we invite embodies the farm-to-fork philosophy, not by trend, but as a reflection of their values. They set leading examples in health cuisine, circularity, biodiversity, seasonality, traceability, local sourcing, zero waste, sustainable seafood, and ancestral foods.

**10 PROOF (PHYSICAL EVIDENCE)**

The Ministries of F&B and Digital Economy are integrating KPIs into the national multi-metric system to measure and evaluate the success of the National Sustainable Gastronomy Strategy 2026. Reference to our guest promise outlined in the first course, we will quantify and qualify the four core values. Our progress will be monitored and assessed internally by the National Sustainable Gastronomy Alliance and will undergo external audits by our international partners.

Your Excellency, our national strategy has a central role for sustainable gastronomy at the intersection of Agriculture, Culinary Arts, Heritage, Destination Management, and Responsible Tourism. My Ministry is dedicated to driving this sustainable transformation across communities, economies, and ecosystems.

Yours sincerely,

**Nico Dingemans**

Minister of Food & Beverage

