

# How will Sweden's ambitious climate targets change how we eat and get around?

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### Key messages

- Achieving Sweden's goal of becoming a fossil-free welfare society with net-zero emissions by 2045 will change people's consumption patterns, particularly in the food and transport sectors, the two consumption categories with the highest emissions in Sweden.
  - Visions for a fossil-free transport sector have substantial gaps with respect to the challenges that rural populations may face in this transition. There is a clear need for strategies and policies that ensure that the transition to a fossil free welfare state does not have unfair impacts on rural populations.
  - There is also a lack of clarity on how consumers will be incentivized to switch from car use to public transport, cycling and walking. Planning and transparency on how national targets will be achieved is necessary for both effectiveness and securing legitimacy among the public.
  - The policy package recently proposed by the Swedish Government in response to surging fuel and electricity prices does recognize the different challenges urban and rural populations face in the transition to carbon neutral transport. This is a positive development, but at the same time the proposed policies risk prolonging incentives for choosing car transport and the use of fossil fuels. There is a clear need to find ways to mitigate the impacts of future price shocks or other shocks without pausing the transition to carbon neutral transport.
  - Visions for a fossil-free food sector lack aims for what climate friendly food consumption means and what changes to current consumption practices will be needed. Although consumption-based emissions are likely to be introduced in Sweden, more clarity is required from decision makers on 1) to what extent significantly reducing the climate impacts of food is a policy goal, and 2) what policy tools consumers can expect to be implemented to achieve significant changes to food choices.
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## 1. Introduction

Sweden has a goal of becoming a fossil-free welfare society with net-zero emissions by 2045 (Kuylenstierna et al., 2021). Achieving this goal will entail changes to Swedes' consumption patterns as well as new practices. To identify ways to mitigate unintended impacts of the climate transition, and to secure political and public support for climate reforms, it is crucial to better understand how climate policies will impact on and be perceived by different groups in society.

As part of a larger research effort we reviewed visions and strategies for the transition to a fossil-free transport sector and food sector. We chose to focus on these two sectors because of their importance to Sweden's climate targets and because of the likely impacts that transition in these sectors will have on the public. Our review shows current policies and roadmaps leave large gaps in explaining how Sweden's climate targets will be achieved. Decision makers need to address these gaps and uncertainties to better understand impacts on individuals and to develop appropriate policies for managing these impacts.

## 2. Policies, visions, and targets with the greatest impacts on our day-to-day lives

### Transport

Sweden has set a national interim climate target of reducing the transport sector's greenhouse gas emissions by 70% by 2030 compared to 2010 levels (Kuylenstierna et al., 2021). However, the current pace of emissions reductions in the transport sector is only a quarter of the pace needed to meet the 2030 target (Kuylenstierna et al., 2021). In response to this problem, Sweden's Climate Policy Council has highlighted three main ways in which stronger political action can close the emissions gap:

- decrease the use of personal cars in favour of more public transport, cycling and walking
- increase vehicle electrification and the use of biofuels
- increase the efficiency of vehicle use, with more energy efficient vehicles, and new business models for more efficient traffic solutions.

One other important national target for the transition in the transport sector is the target to increase the use of public transport, cycling and walking to at least 25% of all personal transport in 2025, compared to 20% in 2020, and to further increase the share to 50% over the longer term (Bonde et al., 2019).

### Food

Sweden has adopted two main visions for transition in the food sector. First, the National Food Strategy for Sweden has the overarching objective of a competitive food system where total domestic food production increases at the same time as national environmental targets are met (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). With regard to consumers, the objective is to secure high trust in food products and to provide them with opportunities to make informed and sustainable choices, such as buying more locally sourced and/or organic food products, regardless of socio-economic status (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017).

The second main national goal is to reduce food waste. This aim is guided by Sweden's commitment under Agenda 2030, specifically SDG 12.3, to reduce global per capita food waste by half by 2030 (Livsmedelsverket et al., 2018). To achieve this, the government has adopted

interim targets for food waste and food loss<sup>1</sup> to be reduced by 20% (in weight) by 2025, compared to 2020 levels (Miljödepartementet & Näringsdepartementet, 2020). These targets involve the entire food production and supply chain, from farm to table.

Climate targets for consumption and exports are currently being debated in Sweden. In April 2022, the Swedish Environmental Objectives Committee presented an interim report as a part of its mission to develop a strategy to achieve sustainable consumption. The report includes a proposal for setting targets for consumption-based emissions and has received support from all political parties in the Swedish Parliament (Regeringskansliet, 2022b). How these proposed targets will be implemented has yet to be addressed, however.

### 3. What changes are individuals expected to make?

To analyze the changes individuals are expected to make, we gathered 14 visions and strategies proposed by government agencies (see Annex 1 for a detailed list of policy documents). Focusing on the food and transport sector, we reviewed the visions and strategies and coded them to extract existing and envisioned policy instruments and measures directed at achieving the climate targets, system changes, technological solutions, and behavioural changes. Table 1 summarizes the existing policy instruments and measures. The table is limited to policies relevant to consumption patterns or levels in the food and road transport sectors.

Table 1. Existing policy instruments and measures for the road transport and food sectors.

Sector	Policy instruments and measures
<b>Transport</b>	Energy and carbon taxes on fuels
	Congestion charges
	Tax and subsidy system on new cars (differentiated vehicle taxes and subsidies for purchases of low emission vehicles)
	Rule on blending of biofuels into gasoline and diesel (increase to 66%)
	Public funding or tax credits for public and non-public charging infrastructure
	Public investment support to promote sustainable urban environments
	Municipal parking requirements
<b>Food</b>	Guidance and planning requirements for prioritizing public transport for large developments and for setting the number of parking spaces
	Information and education programmes on safe food products, good eating habits, and sustainable production
	Procurement policies and environmental criteria for food in public food service programmes, such as in schools and hospitals
	Information and education programmes to reduce food waste

<sup>1</sup> The SDG 12 targets both food waste and food loss, measuring the status using separate indicators for the two. Food waste is focuses on losses that occur at retail and consumption level, and food loss considers losses taking place from production up until retail level (Fabi & English, 2018).

## Transport

Transport policies for achieving Sweden's climate targets are likely to encourage consumers, to some extent, to shift away from personal car ownership and use. The relevant existing policies in Table 1 together with proposals to strengthen congestion charges and reform energy and carbon taxes imply an increase in costs for the use of personal vehicles and thereby incentivize the use of other modes of transport. Other proposals to incentivize a shift to other modes of transport include: reductions in the share of urban space dedicated to private vehicles, increased parking charges combined with improvements to public transport, and building denser and mixed neighbourhoods designed to reduce transport needs.

At the same time, existing and envisioned policies suggest that consumers are expected to shift away from fossil fuel vehicles to zero-emission vehicles and more energy efficient vehicles. In addition to the existing policies presented in Table 1, The Swedish Government has set out a vision for all new car sales by 2030 to be 100% zero-emission cars .

Lastly, measures directed towards making the use of personal vehicles less convenient in urban areas can be expected to encourage the development of new business models for transport, such as ride-sharing and carpooling.

In light of the ongoing energy crisis in Europe and following the war in Ukraine, the Swedish Government recently announced a proposed policy package as a response to surging fuel and electricity prices to support Swedish consumers (Regeringskansliet, 2022a). The policy package includes both shorter-term and longer-term measures. The transport-relevant policies are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Transport-related policies in the policy package to support Swedish consumers.

Short-term measures	
<b>Temporarily lower fuel taxes on gasoline and diesel, from June to October 2022</b>	The level of fuel tax is temporarily lowered to the lowest permitted level according to EU regulations between 1 June and 31 October.
<b>Introduction of a new fuel compensation for private individuals who own a car</b>	The support is a one-off compensation of SEK 1000 per car owner. Private individuals living in specific municipalities, mainly sparsely populated areas, will receive a compensation of SEK 1500 per car owner. Applies to a maximum of one car per person.
<b>Additional funds for the continuation of the tax and subsidy system on new cars</b>	More funds are allocated to the tax and subsidy system for new cars. The amount rewarded to each low emission vehicle remains the same.
Long-term measures	
<b>Reform of the work journey tax deduction</b>	The new work journey tax deduction is solely based on distance (i.e. no longer takes into account the mode or costs of the transport). Planned to enter into force on 1 January.
<b>Freezing the reduction obligation</b>	The mandatory blend-in levels of biofuels in gasoline and diesel will remain at the 2022 levels during 2023.
<b>Pausing of the GDP-linked price increase of fuel prices</b>	The GDP-linked surcharge to fuel will continue to be paused during 2023, as it has been during 2021 and 2022.

## Food

For the food sector, policy visions suggest that consumers will be encouraged to make more sustainable choices in their food consumption. This will be done by providing better information to consumers and teaching about sustainable food choices in schools. The contents of this information is not yet clearly specified, but from current policies and policy visions we can see that consumers will be encouraged to buy more locally sourced, seasonal, and organic food products. Consumers will be encouraged to reduce their food waste through improving information and raising awareness.

## 4. What are the gaps in target setting and implementation?

### Transport

Existing and envisioned policies for a fossil-free transport sector leave important gaps with respect to challenges faced by rural populations. Policies aiming at reducing the need for owning and using personal vehicles are generalized and do not address the different conditions of urban and rural populations in Sweden. The potential for shifting away from personal vehicle ownership and use in rural areas is reduced by limitations in public transport (Winslott Hiselius et al., 2020). This means that rural populations can be expected to be more reliant on zero-emission vehicles and could face problems with high upfront vehicle costs and a lack of appropriate infrastructure, such as charging points. There is a clear need to develop strategies that ensure that policies do not impact rural populations in an unfair way.

There are also gaps related to the target to increase the share of public transport, cycling and walking. Many of the existing and envisioned policies directed at achieving this target would make personal vehicle usage more expensive or less convenient. While these policies do incentivize an increased share of non-car transport modes, it is unclear how strong these incentives will be. The target of increasing the share by more than twice the current level is substantial, so the question remains as to how such a large shift in behaviour will be brought about. Without clear plans for how to shift behaviour it is difficult to identify ways to mitigate any unintended negative effects.

The recently proposed policy package does touch upon the different challenges urban and rural populations can face in the transition to carbon neutral transport. The fuel compensation for private car owners and the reformed work journey tax deduction provide support to those groups particularly dependent on car transport (although the measures are not highly targeted). However, these new policies also raise tensions between mitigating near-term challenges and the overarching national climate target. The policies have been introduced as a reaction to surging fuel prices and introduce both shorter and longer-term measures that could maintain incentives for choosing personal car transport and the use of fossil fuels for some groups. These reactive policies essentially put transition policies on hold rather than finding ways to mitigate the effects of transition policies. More price shocks or other shocks can be expected over a long transition period and there is a need to find ways to address these crises without compromising the rate of transition.



## Food

The National Food Strategy places a strong focus on the production side. With Swedish agriculture being relatively climate efficient, they hope to reduce global emissions by increasing domestic production for greater self-sufficiency and increased exports (Regeringskansliet näringsdepartementet, 2017). The strategy does not, however, have clear aims or targets for changes to food consumption patterns or for how much greenhouse gas emissions related to food consumption should be reduced. The academic literature on the climate impacts of food consumption suggests a need for much more significant changes to consumption patterns than those in existing Swedish policy and policy visions. Based on the results from the EAT-Lancet Commission, the average dietary patterns of the Swedish population have environmental impacts that exceed global environmental boundaries for greenhouse gas emissions, cropland use, biodiversity, and application of nutrients (Moberg et al., 2020). To reduce the environmental and climate impact of food consumption, studies show that a reduction in the consumption of animal products, especially red meat, can have the largest impacts on emissions (Hallström et al., 2021; Martin & Brandão, 2017; Moberg et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2019). The mix of proteins sources recommended for a climate optimal diet is however under debate. A recent study by van Selm et al. (2022) indicates that the recommended mix of proteins depend on assumptions about the way meat is produced. There is however a consensus on a need for large reductions in animal protein intake in dietary guidelines.

The lack of emissions targets related to food and the lack of clear policy visions for bringing about changes to the types of food we eat makes it difficult to identify potential tensions and risks posed by the transition. As it stands, current policies place a lot of the responsibility on consumers for bringing about the transition, an approach that is not proven to be very effective (Grubb et al., 2020; Reisch et al., 2013). Stronger policies, such as increased taxes on emissions-intensive foods, are one potential avenue for bringing about larger shifts in food consumption patterns. However, such policies may have negative impacts on socio-economically weaker groups and meet resistance from individual consumers generally. The reality is that decision makers have yet to tackle the hard issues of how large emissions reductions in the food sector can be brought about while still respecting people's freedom of choice. Bearing in mind the broad political support for consumption-based emission targets, it will be interesting to see how food-related consumption emissions will be addressed and how policies on food consumption will be designed and implemented.

## 5. Conclusion and policy gaps

Given the extent of the transition that the 2045 Swedish climate target entails it is now urgent that policymakers explain to the public how these societal changes will be implemented in practice. The long-term public support for the transition to a fossil-free welfare state depends on effective and fair implementation. This requires that tensions between environmental and other objectives, or between different socio-economic groups, are identified early by policymakers and as far as possible minimized.

The key policy gaps we identified in the visions for transition are summarized below. These gaps need to be addressed to better understand how the transition will impact on individuals and to develop policies to manage these impacts.

### Key policy gaps

- Policies aiming to reduce the need for owning and using personal vehicles are generalized and do not properly consider the needs of rural populations in Sweden. There is a need for strategies to ensure that rural communities aren't impacted in an unfair way.
- There is a lack of clarity in how substantial increases in the use of public and non-motorized transport will be brought about. More planning and transparency is necessary for securing legitimacy among the public.
- Both shorter- and longer-term policy measures to manage price shocks appear reactive and are not aligned with the overarching national climate target. There is a need to find ways to mitigate price or other shocks without delaying transition efforts.
- The current visions for a fossil-free food sector lack clear aims and targets for food consumption and for what changes are needed in current consumption patterns. There is broad political support for introducing targets for consumption-based emissions in general. In developing these targets more clarity is required from decision makers on 1) to what extent significantly reducing the climate impacts of food is a policy goal, and 2) what policy tools consumers can expect to be implemented to achieve significant changes to food choices.

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## Annex 1

Table 3. Full list of reviewed visions and strategies to move away from fossil fuels in the transport and food sector. The review took place between June 2020 and February 2021.

Sector	Title	Short description	Main organization behind
Transport	2019 Report of the Swedish Climate Policy Council	The 2019 assessment of the Swedish government's climate policy, special focus on the transport sector	Sweden's Climate Policy Council
	Kontrollstation för Strategisk plan för omställning av transportsektorn till fossilfrihet	The Swedish Energy Agency's status report of the national strategic plan for a transition to a fossil-free transport sector	The Swedish Energy Agency
	Biojet för flyget SOU 2019:11	Report of the Swedish Government's inquiry on policy instruments to promote the use of biofuels for aviation	Inquiry reviewing group appointed by the Swedish Government
	Strategisk plan för omställning av transportsektorn till fossilfrihet	The Swedish Energy Agency's national strategic plan for a transition to a fossil-free transport sector	The Swedish Energy Agency
	Styrmedel för ett transporteffektivt samhälle	Memorandum on policy instruments for a transport efficient society	The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
	2021 Report of the Swedish Climate Policy Council	The 2021 assessment of the Swedish government's climate policy, special focus on crisis policy and climate change	Sweden's Climate Policy Council
Food	Ett klimatvänligt jordbruk 2050	The 2021 assessment of the Swedish government's climate policy, special focus on crisis policy and climate change	Sweden's Climate Policy Council
	En livsmedelsstrategi för Sverige – fler jobb och hållbar tillväxt i Sverige (kortversion)	Short version of the Swedish Government's national food strategy	The Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation
	En livsmedelsstrategi för Sverige – fler jobb och hållbar tillväxt i Sverige. Regeringens handlingsplan del 2	The second part of the action plan of the Swedish Government's national food strategy	The Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation
	Fler gör mer – handlingsplan för minskat matsvinn 2030	The Swedish Food Agency's action plan for food loss and food waste reduction by 2030	The Swedish Food Agency
	Pressmeddelande – Nya nationella mål påskyndar omställningen till en cirkulär ekonomi	Press release stating that the Swedish Government has adopted new interim targets for food waste and food loss reduction	Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, the Ministry of the Environment
	Matavfall i Sverige – Uppkomst och behandling 2018	Report on Food waste statistics in Sweden 2018	The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Transport and Food	Underlag till regeringens klimatpolitiska handlingsplan	The underlying document for the Swedish Government's Climate Policy Action Plan	The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
	2020 Report of the Swedish Climate Policy Council	The 2020 assessment of the Swedish government's climate policy, special focus on the transport sector	Sweden's Climate Policy Council



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