

MANIFESTO FOR ESTABLISHING MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC CANTEENS ACROSS THE EU

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Following a policy paper on '[**Sustainable Public Procurement of Food: A Goal Within Reach**](#)', which presented the 'business case' for sustainable healthy food procurement, and key [**policy recommendations for using procurement for a systemic food transformation**](#), this **Farm to Fork Procurement Manifesto** (hereafter 'F2F Procurement Manifesto') aims to inspire the European Commission and the EU Member States as well as regional and local public authorities with **seven actionable propositions** for establishing **minimum standards for public canteens in Europe**.

European public canteens, and in particular school meals, are **low-hanging fruit for the implementation of the EU Farm to Fork strategy**. They can be catalysts for food system transformation if their public spending actions include ambitious requirements that go beyond environmental or 'green' requests.

What if all public and school canteens across Europe had to abide by minimum mandatory criteria that **support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**? Some may oppose higher costs, but as we all know by now, the costs of unsustainable practices related to any of these aspects are far higher for society and taxpayers ([**see the previous EU FPC paper**](#) for evidence on cost-effective food procurement).

So why buy cheap and unhealthy food when public food procurement provides such a good opportunity for tackling so **many sustainability policy goals on one plate**? Buying better to achieve more is the intention of this Manifesto.

This **F2F Procurement Manifesto**, produced in the framework of the EU Food Policy Coalition, presents seven mandatory (minimum) and optional criteria for public canteens:

- 1. HEALTHY FOOD**
- 2. ORGANIC AND OTHER AGRO-ECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS**
- 3. SMALL-SCALE FARMERS SUPPORT**
- 4. CLIMATE ACTION**
- 5. SOCIAL ECONOMY AND LABOUR RIGHTS**
- 6. FAIR TRADE**
- 7. ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS**

This Manifesto has to be seen as a whole rather than its single parts as it is in combination with all seven minimum targets and criteria that systemic change is attained.

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OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

GOOD GOVERNANCE FIRST

In Europe, local and regional public authorities¹ play a key role in the implementation of sustainable food systems, and they have the **mandate to procure** food or catering services for their institutions/bodies, such as schools, daycares, hospitals, etc. Not only do they command the budgets, and thus have the power to exert market pressure, they have the responsibility to be exemplary in how they spend taxpayers money. Sustainable procurement involves looking beyond short-term needs and considering the longer-term impacts of each purchase. Hence, they are the focus for establishing mandatory criteria for food procurement.

Nonetheless, **local and regional governments need national governments** to provide support and guidance for the implementation of resilient regional food systems. Vertical cooperation among different governance levels is needed in order to address national, European, and global challenges in local dimensions.

For instance, to **support cost-efficient public food procurement** and more resilient city-regions and food regions, smart logistics and infrastructure need to be in place (see chapter "small farmers"). In some cases, national dietary guidelines sometimes misalign with the ambition of local governments to support plant rich diets.²

Taking a systemic approach to food systems transformation calls for **cooperation across different departments**, from health, energy, environment, procurement, education, and waste to social welfare. Policy coherence needs to be considered in food policies to avoid the creation of contradictory forces in the transformation towards sustainable food systems.

HOW TO GET THERE

- Support training of public procurers.
- Create meetings of public procurement experts at national or international level.
- Develop multi-level governance model discussions around food & food procurement.
- Promote co-creation of urban, regional and national food policies.

MARKET ENGAGEMENT FIRST

Good practice, from the cities of Copenhagen and Ghent, as examples, show that food procurement practices that include a diverse range of stakeholders in the planning phase from along the supply chain - starting with food producers, caterers to canteen/kitchen staff - are critical to reach ambitious health and sustainability targets, and ultimately result in more resilient food regions.

¹ Otherwise known as 'contracting authorities', according to public procurement legislation.

² See recommendation number two of 'Increasing action on sustainable and healthy school food procurement in the EU. Recommendations for national and EU policy makers' available at https://procuraplus.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Interest_Group/StratKIT-Recommendations-www.pdf

By consulting with the market of potential suppliers early on, procurers can avoid risks, such as by putting too much weight on price rather than quality or by formulating overly rigid requirements that may prevent SMEs from participating in 'calls for tenders' (or open competitions). This is why up-to-date knowledge of market structures, actors and technical and feasibility aspects are invaluable for devising procurement goals. Goals that also achieve increasingly ambitious sustainability targets, such as those related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, supporting local/short food supply chains and preserving biodiversity.³ Establishing a two-way dialogue with the market in the stage prior to starting the public procurement process is fundamentally important to procure sustainably, build trust and innovate.

SEVEN MINIMUM MANDATORY CRITERIA FOR PUBLIC CANTEENS IN EUROPE

The proposed targets and criteria are provided as examples to inspire the European Commission and EU Member States (-> EU Farm to Fork strategy) as well as individual contracting authorities, and central purchasing bodies, to adopt similar practices. The precise wording of the targets and criteria should be adapted to the procurement practices in place within the organisation, in compliance with national/regional legislation and policies.

1. HEALTHY FOOD

Target

100% of all public meals are based on dietary guidelines that ensure sustainable, healthy nutrition for all relevant age groups and social contexts.

Procurement criteria

- At least two age-appropriate portions⁴ of fruit must be offered daily (during main meals and breaks).
- At least two age-appropriate portions of raw or prepared vegetables must be offered daily (during main meals and breaks).
- At least 75% of bread, pasta, rice, and other grain-based products must be offered as whole grain.
- For catering contracts: economic operators⁵ must prove their expertise and knowledge in cooking and preparing healthy food with high nutritional value (selection criteria).
- For schools, daycare centres and the like: the sale and serving of sweetened drinks, including sugar sweetened beverages (such as juices, soft drinks, etc.), artificially sweetened beverages (such as diet beverages, etc.), and energy drinks, is prohibited, including in canteens, kiosks, vending machines or during any school-related event.
- Marks will be awarded to economic operators who replace processed meat products with healthier alternatives.
- Marks will be awarded to economic operators who replace snacks and desserts high in fat, sugar and/or salt (HFSS)⁶ - as defined by a health-oriented nutrient profiling model - in canteens, kiosks, vending machines or during events with healthier alternatives, such as fruit and/or nuts.⁷

For additional criteria on nutritious plant-based foods, such as fruit, vegetables, legumes and cereals - see criteria under 'climate-friendly food', including with a view on seasonality.

Verification

The above minimum and optional procurement criteria are controlled and monitored during the execution of the contract. This could be carried out by a review committee including the contracting authority and involved stakeholders, assisted by dedicated procurement tools.

⁴ Example of age appropriate: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/portion-sizes/>

⁵ 'Economic operators' are companies, producers or service providers, for instance, that bid for the contract.

⁶ Products high in fats, sugars and salt (HFSS) should be defined following a health-oriented nutrient profiling model - either European, national, or WHO (see for instance the WHO Europe [Nutrient profile model](#)).

⁷ Note: Several schools have banned all nuts due to allergy concerns. It would be helpful to have a criterion which identifies nuts which can be included which have little or no risk of allergic reactions.

In case of violations, a dialogue will be started with the economic operator, and the contracting authority is entitled to withhold remuneration. If no improvement is observed, the economic operator must pay a penalty and, ultimately, the contracting authority has the right to terminate the contract.

Rationale

#Dietary guidelines

- While all EU Member States have national dietary guidelines in place, their practical application in local procurement settings should be improved with a view to maximising health benefits. This proposal emphasises the need for a deeper integration of dietary guidelines in procurement practices.
- Concrete criteria are proposed to support the prioritisation of key dietary recommendations to increase the opportunities that public food procurement offers for creating healthy food environments.
- The target envisions a progressive update of dietary guidelines to integrate other sustainability dimensions beyond nutrition, such as adopting a planetary health diet.⁸

How to get there

#Dietary guidelines

- To ensure successful application of procurement policies and practices that maximise health gains, national dietary and nutritional guidelines should set ambitious goals and directions for public procurers to guide the creation of sustainable healthy meals. Such meals should emphasise the increased intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, pulses, seeds, berries, and nuts, and ensure that the intake of sugars, salt and fats does not exceed recommendations, while giving preference to minimally processed foods.
- To make the above possible, Member States should regularly revise their guidelines, based on an evidence-based process that is in the public interest, involving independent expertise. Such updates should progressively include other sustainability dimensions alongside nutritional recommendations, such as production methods, climate mitigation, reduced antibiotic use, healthy occupational standards, and encourage more plant-rich diets. Guidelines should be designed to enable the creation of nutritionally appropriate menus for dietary patterns with differing levels and types of animal food intakes.
- Establishing European sustainable healthy dietary guidelines, or at least common building blocks for such guidelines, will help to enable greater coherency between public procurement law and food policies across the EU, such as the EU Farm to Fork strategy. These can draw on, for instance, the [guiding principles for sustainable healthy diets](#) by the FAO and WHO.
- To distinguish between different foods based on their contribution to dietary quality, it is suggested that health-oriented nutrient profiles be used, such as the WHO Europe [Nutrient profile model](#). Should an appropriate European nutrient profile be established, it could be used to ensure further policy coherence.

⁸ <https://eatforum.org/learn-and-discover/the-planetary-health-diet/>

2. ORGANIC AND OTHER AGRO-ECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS

Target

At least 20% of procured food is certified as organic, and marks are awarded for agro-ecological practices beyond the minimum organic requirement.

Procurement criteria

#Organic food content

At least 20% of procured food (by mass/volume, value or number of food items - to be specified by contracting authority) shall originate from organic agriculture (see [EU GPP criteria](#), page 6 fll)

#GMOs

All food and feed shall be GMO free, as defined in Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 (Art. 24-25).

#Additional agro-ecological practices support

Marks will be awarded to tenderers that commit to source food (beyond the minimum required to be certified organic) from farms that support the transition to agroecology, according to the FAO '10 Elements of Agroecology⁹ and the '13 Agroecological Principles.¹⁰ Higher marks will be awarded for system approaches such as organic farming than for less ambitious approaches based on single farming practices.

Verification

#Organic food content

A list of food and drink products [to be inserted by the contracting authority] must comply with Regulation (EC) No 2018/848 or its subsequent amendments.

The tenderer must provide a declaration that all food and drink products listed (or, provide a list of food and drink items indicating their mass/volume/value) comply with Regulation (EC) No 2018/848 or its subsequent amendments. In addition, the tenderer must provide a description of how it intends to ensure that the listed products can be sourced during contract execution from organic sources (e.g. by identifying suppliers for the different products). [[See EU GPP Criteria on food and catering](#), p.6 fll]

#GMOs

Food and feed labelled as containing GMO, according to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 (Art. 24-25) shall not be accepted.

#Additional agro-ecological practices support

The bidder should include evidence of commitment to transitioning to more sustainable food production systems. This could include an organic certification issued by an independent organisation, the Demeter certification or equivalent, membership of a Participatory Guarantee System or evidence (documents, annual report, etc.) that food comes from a farm on which one or more from the following has been implemented: protection and restoration of natural ecosystems, sustainable land and water management, crop rotation with leguminous crops, reduced erosion and increasing soil organic matter, reduced use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers and integrated pest management, such as biocontrol.

⁹ FAO, 2016. Guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems the 10 elements of agroecology.

<https://www.fao.org/3/19037en/19037en.pdf>

¹⁰ A European Association for Agroecology, 2022. 13 principles of Agroecology.

<https://www.agroecology-europe.org/the-13-principles-of-agroecology/> and <https://www.fao.org/3/ca5602en/ca5602en.pdf>

Rationale

Organic food content #Agro-ecological approach to food

- The rationale behind the proposed criteria is diverse and stems from several factors. These range from the array of legal regimes in different EU countries to the multiplicity of regimes and targets of different institutions (schools, hospitals, kindergartens, elderly care homes, etc.) to the variety of food purchased.
- Despite a growing interest in sustainable and healthy food products from the public across the EU, the demand and supply of organic or other agro-ecological products still varies considerably from country to country.
- Some countries (e.g. France, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Italy, Denmark and Latvia) already have mandatory requirements for purchasing organic food, with particularly advanced examples at the local government level (from Copenhagen to Rome and from Torres Vedras to Ljubljana). In such countries, targets differ significantly: 50-100% in Italy depending on the food product, 60% by 2030 in Sweden, 25% by 2030 in Finland; 20% in France or Germany.
- Some countries are currently in the process of adopting mandatory requirements - such as Slovenia, Portugal, Croatia, Czech Republic - while other countries are further behind (Netherlands, Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania), with requirements for organically certified food remaining voluntary, limited, and taking place largely among individual/private consumers.

How to get there

- Continue to **promote the elaboration of development and research programmes** dedicated to organic farming, in combination with national dietary and nutrition guidelines.
- Be **progressive over time, acknowledge the differences** between food systems and institutions at the EU level to avoid the creation of a distorted EU market.
- Support the transition by including "**in-conversion" farms** into procurement criteria/requirements.
- Promote **EU Member State advice and support to farms that are part of an agro-ecological transition** embedding their farms in the carriage soil capacity of their land and autonomous from external entrants.
- Promote **EU States advice and support to organic farmers or those wishing to convert** (with state or public-funded advisory, information and training services and financial incentives).
- **Organising organic and agroecological production/products advertising and promotion policies**, towards enterprises and the general public, especially children.
- **Highlighting the decorrelation** between the national level of organic production and high public procurement targets, as well as the **correlation** between increased demand and increased domestic market offer for organic products.
- **Raise awareness among public authorities and consumers** about the positive impact that organic and other agroecological practices have on society, the environment and biodiversity protection.

3. SMALL-SCALE FARMERS SUPPORT

Target

At least 10% of food originates from small-scale farmers, defined by turnover, agricultural area and number of employees.¹¹

Recommendations on supporting small-scale farmers in public procurement

Note: Though the EU Farm to Fork Strategy acknowledges increased "calls for shorter supply chains" and that Europeans "want to feel closer to their food (...) that is fresh, less processed and sustainably sourced" it is not possible yet to give direct preference to small-scale farmers under current EU procurement law.¹² To halt the drastic decline of small-scale farmers in Europe, EU policy makers are strongly encouraged to change this.

1) Pre-procurement market engagement:

At the pre-procurement stage, bidders should be asked about their ability to source food products from small-scale farmers and which do not originate from factory farming.¹³ The importance to the contracting authority of including such producers and products in food and catering contracts, wherever possible, should be emphasised, and bidders asked about any perceived barriers to their participation (e.g. cost, volume or specification of food products, delivery times, etc.) so that these can be avoided in the procurement criteria/requirements. The impact of dividing the contract into smaller lots should also be discussed (e.g. according to food type), as this may encourage participation by smaller operators.

2) Reserving contracts or lots for producers who employ disabled or disadvantaged workers¹⁴

Contracting authorities can choose to reserve a contract, or one or more lots of a contract, for bidders who employ at least 30% disabled or disadvantaged workers (e.g. in food production, processing, distribution, catering services etc) as set out in Article

20 of Directive 2014/24/EU.¹⁵ This can help to encourage the participation of social enterprises and non-commercial organisations in public procurement, and the definition of 'disadvantaged workers' could potentially include small farmers if they are at risk of poverty. Further information on how to use this reservation, and an example of its application for school meals in France, is available in the European Commission *Buying Social* Guide (second edition, 2021)¹⁶

3) Subdivision of tender into smaller lots or direct contracts

Dividing contracts into small lots is easier if the contracting authority is buying directly rather than awarding a contract to a wholesaler or intermediary. If the contracting authority is managing the kitchen rather than outsourcing catering service contracts, the best option might be to simply have different direct contracts for different primary agricultural products. Preferring seasonal primary food, at least partly corresponding to local culinary traditions and being attentive to biodiversity (e.g. different types/sorts of apples) can further support short supply chains.

¹¹ Those with a turnover up to 100,000 euro, a maximum agricultural area as defined by the concerned EU Member State for small-scale farmers and type of agriculture, and up to five employees beyond family members.

¹² This is due to the principle of non-discrimination and because the issue of small-scale farmers relates to the size of the supplier, rather than to the goods or services being purchased (link to the subject-matter requirement).

¹³ For the definition of 'factory farming' see the chapter on 'Animal welfare-friendly food' on high animal welfare standards.

¹⁴ The reservation under Article 20 of Directive 2014/24/EU is not based on the size of organisations, but on their employment of disabled or disadvantaged workers.

¹⁵ See Article 20 of Directive 2014/24/EU. National implementing legislation must be checked for any conditions attached to reservations.

¹⁶ The list provided in Buying Social of potential categories of disadvantaged workers includes those 'who may be considered at risk of poverty or severely deprived (e.g. people in a condition of material deprivation, persons living in households with very low work intensity, homeless, etc.)' - as well as a number of other categories which may apply to small-scale farmers.

4) Good practice: Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) and online market platforms

Dynamic Food Procurement¹⁷ (DFP) refers to an innovative framework contract where qualified suppliers, particularly smaller producers, can join in at any time and supply just the quantity they produce. In practice, all qualifying suppliers are registered on a platform and participate in mini-competitions, according to procurement requirements and seasonality. Against a list of specific products to be delivered, registered suppliers submit their prices. DFP provides an open digital marketplace for food producers and buyers. By removing many of the barriers to entry for suppliers, a more balanced market can emerge, creating substantial opportunities for local producers and suppliers.

Business to Business (B2B) platforms is yet another innovative approach to supporting small producers by procuring products through an online marketplace. The City of Ghent (Belgium) organised a **procurement procedure through a cooperative B2B platform** that connects farmers and retailers, the hospitality industry and industrial kitchens. Producers can sell their short-supply-chain products directly through this platform and deliver them to catering and centralised kitchens. Given the success of this short-supply chain procedure, which gave the City access to more producers and allowed cooks to propose a creative menu, the City of Ghent subsequently decided to issue a larger tender (contract value €139,000).¹⁸

Rationale

- The number of farms in the EU-27 declined between 2003 and 2016 by 32%, with the decline being the strongest among small farms (<5 hectares; -38%). By 2040, the EU might lose an additional 6.4 million farms, resulting in a remaining number of approximately 3.9 million farms across the EU. An impressive 62% decrease, compared to 2016 figure.¹⁹
- Small-scale farmers ensure sustainable and more secure access to fresh, diverse and seasonal food therefore strengthening resilience and cultural significance of the city-region food systems. More complex but probably sooner or later necessary is to calculate the carbon footprint of food to factor in the transport costs.
- Linking public canteens and small-scale farmers has the potential to provide a steady income through short food supply chains, overcome market risks, ensure fair prices and guarantee decent work conditions.

How to get there

- Create synergies with the **EU School Fruit, Vegetable and Milk Scheme** which puts priority on children's access to fresh and seasonal food and reconnects them to agriculture through educational activities on the farms.
- Give weight to security of the supply chain in procurement procedures, limiting the number of steps between farm and fork or putting a price on long supply chains. This will indirectly benefit small farmers and even more cooperatives.
- Conduct market engagement and stakeholder dialogue (see "The need for inclusive market engagement" intro) and advertise/promote the open tendering process among smaller producers.
- Make tenders accessible and transparent for small farmers (e.g. dividing the contracts into smaller lots (see above). Include food education in tenders (e.g. award points for activities that contribute to food education, farm visits by schools, for instance).

¹⁷ See, for instance, the online video of the good practice at Bath and North East Somerset at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBWz4i7OHd4>

¹⁸ The use of such platforms can help to keep up with the contracting authority's demand, thanks to the combination of different small producers' offers. Through this contract, 'delicacy' products were purchased (such as goat cheese, local mustard, farm butter, asparagus, etc.) rather than produce bought in bulk (such as potatoes, onions, carrots and long-life milk), due to the limited value of the contract and because this was what the producers were able to offer.

¹⁹ Schuh et al. (2022).

- Invest in infrastructure (e.g. logistics, processing units), to enhance collaborative and short food supply chains (e.g. link with e-market platforms, food hubs, etc.). Redistribute the aid of the CAP so that small-scale farmers can actually be recognised for the crucial role they play in securing food systems and their care of the environment.
- The Unfair Trading Practices Directive could be particularly relevant in this regard, as it explicitly aims to protect smaller food producers from problematic payment and contractual practices. Procurement criteria could require the bidder to demonstrate how they comply with the UTP, with a particular emphasis on producers in the smallest turnover category.
- Offer training and financial support to small farmers and producers in the EU and outside the EU in their transition towards organic and fair trade agriculture and agroecology.
- Contracting authorities can seek to include farmers that are autonomous in their fodder and are not using chemical pesticides or fertilisers.

4. CLIMATE ACTION

Target

25% GHG emissions reduction through more plant-based food, food waste reduction and a low-carbon food chain from farm to fork.

Procurement criteria

[Note: Some of the proposed criteria hereunder do apply for catering contracts only but where a municipality/school employs its own kitchen staff they should implement the criteria that are written into the catering contracts]

#More plant-based food²⁰

- At least two plant-based days per week in public canteens.
- At least 60% of the volume of meat dishes should consist of beans, grains, vegetables or legumes.

#Food waste reduction

- Require food waste prevention measures such as accurate stock inventory and ordering systems, efficient storage, and adapting portion size.
- Flexible meal planning (allowing the use of leftover food or food that is approaching its use-by date).
- Award points for awareness-raising activities related to food waste reduction (see 'How to get there' for more details).
- Require a donation agreement with food banks/food aid associations.

#Low carbon food chain

- Each meal shall include at least one type of seasonal, fresh fruit, vegetable or legume (grown outdoors where possible).
- Require provision of low-impact, free drinking water, and preferably from filtered water fountains (see [EU GPP criteria](#), page 35).
- Award points for more climate-friendly transport modes or smart mobility or logistics concepts.

²⁰ A plant-based diet is a diet consisting mostly or entirely of plant-based foods. Plant-based diets, such as the Mediterranean or the New Nordic Diet, contain low amounts of animal products and high amounts of plant products such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, herbs and spices. Plant-based food should preferably not include ultra-processed products. (See, for instance: FAO and WHO. 2019. Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles. Rome)

#Transversal

- To better implement the above practices, staff training on environmental aspects shall be provided (e.g. 16 hours per year).

Verification

#More plant-based food

The **bidder** should provide sample menus including the quantity of plant-based products, with a balanced nutrient intake. Regular monitoring and control should take place under the contract.

#Food waste reduction

- Tenders must provide standard operating procedures for purchasing, storage, cooking, menu planning and serving, as well as a detailed waste management plan.
- Tenders shall provide details on the planned awareness raising activities related to food waste reduction.
- Tenders shall include an agreement with a food bank/food aid associations to donate the surplus food or offer other options to redistribute surplus food.

#Low carbon food chain

- Control & monitoring as part of contract management.
- Verification of low carbon concepts or vehicles.

#Transversal

- Public procurers should provide a training plan as part of their Call for Tenders, indicating the timing and topics to be covered. A record showing the hours spent on staff training hours during each quarter must be provided during the execution of the contract.

Rationale

#More plant-based food

- Intensive industrial livestock farming, because it requires very large quantities of fossil energy in order to make, process and transport inputs and outputs, is responsible for a considerable amount of emissions of greenhouse gases.²¹ It has been reported that 20 European meat and dairy companies combined produce the equivalent of more than half of the United Kingdom, France and Italy's emissions.²²
- A territorialised approach to animal breeding, in which animals can be fed by local crops and where the manure can be re-used directly to fertilise the soil and therefore reduce the import of agricultural inputs on farms proves to be the most efficient way to start an agroecological transition.²³
- Numerous scientific publications²⁴ consider the major potential of vegetable, cereal and fruit based meals for climate and environment - recognised also in the EU GPP Criteria (for food and catering services) under plant-based menus.

²¹ Andrés Muños Rico et al., 2020.

²² Shefali Sharma, 2021.

²³ Poux.X. et al. 2021.

²⁴ E.g. Planetary Health Diet, EAT-Lancet Report.

- Some EU countries (mainly in Western and Northern Europe) have mandatory meat reduction targets or meat-free menus in canteens in place, either at the national level (as in Denmark, France) or at the local one (Berlin, Vienna). In Vienna, this enabled the city to save 57,000 euro and approximately 11,700 tonnes of CO₂ equivalents/year.²⁵

#Food waste reduction

- Studies suggest that 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food that is not consumed.²⁶ In the EU alone, around 88 million tonnes of food waste are generated annually, responsible for 6% of total EU greenhouse gas emissions, with associated costs estimated at 143 billion euro.²⁷
- Food waste reduction is essential to mitigating climate change - which is why the EU has set the ambitious food waste reduction target of 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030.

#Low-impact, free drinking water

- The European Parliament agreed to revise the Drinking Water Directive at the end of 2020 to support the consumption of tap water across the EU. With regards to public canteens, the Directive states that "this should be done through actions aimed at improving access to water intended for human consumption for all, in particular by setting up outdoor and indoor equipment in public spaces where technically feasible, as well as through actions aimed at promoting the use of tap water, for example by encouraging the free provision of water intended for human consumption in public administrations and public buildings (...)"

#Staff training on environment & climate

- All canteen staff shall be made aware of the environmental impacts associated with the food they cook - from menu planning to cooking, all the way to waste management. Cooking staff in particular shall receive guidance to ensure vegetables, fruit, pulses, and cereal-based menus observe the recommended nutritional intake. 16 hours of on-site training per year is recommended.

How to get there

- Ensure access to local quality meat.** Enabling access to local meat from small-scale farms that are autonomous in external entrants and especially fodder.
- Proposing alternatives to meat.** Both at the EU and the national government level, diets richer in vegetables, fruits, pulses, and cereals must be promoted through smart menu planning.
- Users of public canteens** should be informed about the climate impacts of the food they eat through targeted food education and awareness raising efforts.
- Awareness raising activities regarding **food waste reduction**: The minimum level of action should be on disseminating information to all those involved. The more advanced level of action should require active involvement of children by offering them cooking classes; organising food waste reduction competitions, and setting up food waste management approaches/techniques.
- Staff should receive training** on how to cook meals based on vegetables, fruits, pulses, and cereals, reduce the size of meat portions, and tackle food waste.
- Monitoring** the increase in the share of plants provided in menus.

²⁵ [Strategic procurement in European Health Care](#) - Selection of best practice and case studies (HCWH, 2019)

²⁶ UNEP Food Waste Index Report, 2021.

²⁷ [Estimates of European food waste levels](#). IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute (2016)

5. DECENT WORKING CONDITIONS

Target

100% compliance with decent working conditions in conformity with applicable collective bargaining agreements as well as relevant national, EU legislation and international standards, and encouraging the employment of vulnerable workers in the farm to fork food chain.

Procurement criteria

#Decent working conditions

All economic operators interested in applying for public food and catering services tenders must declare full compliance with applicable employment and labour legislation (in all relevant locations under the contract), including national, EU and international standards²⁸ and collective bargaining agreements. (selection criteria).

#Employment of vulnerable workforce

Marks will be awarded to economic operators employing vulnerable workers²⁹ in the farm to fork food chain for the contract being awarded.

Verification

#Decent working conditions

The contracting authority (public procurer) reserves the right to verify compliance with the aforementioned legal requirements (e.g. on-site inspections, monitoring of pay and working conditions).

In case of violations, a dialogue will be started with the economic operator, and the contracting authority is entitled to withhold remuneration. If no improvement is observed, the economic operator must pay a penalty and, ultimately, the contracting authority has the right to terminate the contract.

#Employment of vulnerable workforce

The economic operator must provide appropriate documentation proving the employment of vulnerable workers³⁰ in accordance with applicable decent work legislation.

Rationale

#Decent working conditions

- In accordance with the EU public procurement directives (directives 2014/24/EU, 2014/25/EU and 2014/23/EU), Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that in the performance of public procurement contracts economic operators comply with wages and other working conditions set out by collective agreements for the relevant sector and geographical area and with the statutory minimum wages where they exist and social and labour law at national, EU and International level. Moreover, Member States shall also ensure that economic operators, as a condition for the award of public procurement contracts, are required to comply with relevant wages and other working conditions and to respect the right to collective bargaining and to recognise and negotiate with trade unions, including by responding to the request to start negotiations for collective agreements.

²⁸ E.g. The EU Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work (Directive 89/391 EEC); UN Guiding principle on Business and Human Rights, OECD Due diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct; ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

²⁹ E.g. people with disabilities, migrants and ethnic minorities (including Roma), ex-prisoners, long-term unemployed people.

³⁰ ibid.

- The establishment of fair public procurement criteria is an effective way to raise labour standards. Only economic operators respecting workers' rights, including the right to organise and bargain collectively, should have access to public contracts. The criteria will also ensure no fragmentation amongst Member States occurs in regard to labour conditions in public procurement and will outline a set of clear standards to prevent and mitigate adverse impacts of economic operators' tendering on human and labour rights.

How to get there

- Public procurement, representing on average 15 to 30% of a country's GDP, represents a unique opportunity to strengthen local economies and create quality jobs. Introducing geographical and/or social clauses into public tenders can prove particularly effective.
- The EU public procurement directives already provide for a social clause, however, this clause is not often respected.
- **Labour inspectorates** should play a more relevant role in controlling that such conditions are respected by both procurer and tenderer.

6. FAIR TRADE

Target

At least 25% of the products typically originating from countries outside Europe, such as bananas, coffee and tea, shall be fairly traded.

Procurement criteria

#Fairly traded

The listed products (e.g. bananas, coffee, tea, snacks) shall be fairly traded according to the principles outlined in the 2009 European Commission Communication³¹:

- a fair producer price
- part payments to be made in advance
- long-term, stable relations with producers
- transparency and traceability
- conditions of production respecting the eight ILO Core Conventions
- respect for traditional production methods which promote economic and social development
- capacity building and empowerment for producers
- support for production and market access for the producer organisations
- regular impact assessments of the fair trade-related activities

Award criterion: Marks will be awarded for tenders which offer awareness raising activities around Fair Trade and the principles included in the 2009 EC Communication (e.g. Fair trade week, dedicated sessions) and/or if more fairly traded products are offered.

³¹ Communication from the Commission of the European Communities of the 5 May 2009: Contributing to Sustainable Development: The role of Fair Trade and nongovernmental trade-related sustainability assurance schemes (com (2009) 215 final)

Verification

Products carrying a Fair Trade label, or imported and distributed by Fair Trade Organisations (World Fair Trade Organisation guarantee system), or equivalent, will be presumed to comply. Compliance may also be proved by any other appropriate means.

If non-compliance becomes apparent during the duration of the contract, the contracting authority reserves the right to impose a penalty (e.g. a percentage of the contract price) and/or to terminate the contract.

Rationale

#Fairly traded

- The EU Farm to Fork Strategy confirms the need to consider social aspects when it comes to policy initiatives aiming at sustainability in the agri-food supply chain. Public procurement is a central tool to achieve sustainability in the agri-food supply chain and applying fair trade principles clearly supports social sustainability.
- Fair Trade farmers, workers and producers committing to better social practices in farming, must be rewarded as production methods do matter and the focus should not be exclusively on the end product itself.
- Promoting fair and ethical trade schemes reflects EU consumer demand and contributes to developing more sustainable trade opportunities for small producers in third countries.³² The European Commission has a role to play in facilitating this connection and in raising awareness on both the supply and the demand sides, food public procurement being relevant to that end.
- Setting minimum mandatory criteria for food public procurement that relate to Fair Trade will also ensure that decent work conditions are applied in the supply chain.

How to get there

- Abnormally low tenders should be systematically investigated, particularly to check if they cover the costs of production.
- Raise awareness among public authorities and consumers about the positive impact that choosing Fair Trade products has on smallholder farmers and workers and how production methods matter.
- Public authorities and procurers shall refer to good practices such as the Fair Trade towns' campaign, in order to increase their commitments to fairly traded products.
- Connect Fair Trade producers with wholesalers through procurement agreements.
- Instead of spot contracts, public authorities should award framework agreements that cover multiple contracts during a certain period of time. Framework agreements allow public authorities to build a long-term dialogue with suppliers and to keep track of progress over time.³³
- The European Commission should reinstate its 'Fair and Ethical trade' section within EU trade policy. Similarly, public procurement provisions should be included in trade agreements. That would explicitly allow partners to give preferences to sustainable and socially responsibly produced products.
- Help smallholder farmers and producers in the EU and outside the EU, in their transition towards sustainable agricultural practices, highlighting the need to address social sustainability in farming practices.

³² European Commission, 'Trade For All strategy' (2015)

³³ See e.g. ['Make better use of framework contracts'](#)

➤ Set mandatory requirements and award criteria asking companies to adopt mechanisms to increase the transparency and the human rights and environmental due diligence of the supply chains linked to the subject matter of the contract. Use "Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence" (HREDD) to put in place in their own procurement processes and require it from their suppliers.

7. ANIMAL WELFARE

Target

A higher animal welfare standard in combination with higher plant-based food content.

Procurement criteria

#Eggs

100% of shell eggs and at least 50% of liquid eggs should be certified organic.

#Plant-based food

For increased plant-based food see criteria under 'climate-friendly food'.

#Increased animal welfare

Points will be awarded based on the percentage (by mass/volume/value - to be defined by contracting authority) of food products with high animal welfare standards, including no cages, no mutilation, slow-growing breeds, access to pasture, reduced use of antibiotics, and no transport to slaughter exceeding eight hours, or four hours for poultry and rabbits.

Verification

#Eggs

For verification see chapter 2 on 'organic and other agroecological practices'.

#Plant-based food

For verification see chapter 4 on 'climate-friendly food'.

#Increased animal welfare

Organic label or equivalent proving high animal welfare standards are applied.

Rationale

#Reducing antimicrobial resistance

As recognised by the Council of the European Union, "good animal welfare, in general, improves animal health and reduces the need to use antibiotics, and consequently reduces antimicrobial resistance".³⁴ To this end, setting criteria to reduce poor animal welfare practices (e.g. animals kept in cages or tethered, mutilations, no access to outdoors, etc.) in public procurement can help mitigate the overuse and misuse of antibiotics³⁵ (see also HCWH Guidance).³⁶

³⁴ Council of the European Union. [Council conclusions on animal welfare - an integral part of sustainable animal production](#). 16 December 2019, 14975/19

³⁵ Tang, K.L. et al. 2017. [Restricting the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals and its associations with antibiotic resistance in food-producing animals and human beings: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#). The Lancet, 1(8): E316-E327. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(17\)30141-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(17)30141-9)

³⁶ HCWH (2022) [Procurement criteria: Responsible antimicrobial use in products of animal origin'](#)

#Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals

Moreover, high animal welfare standards are an integral part of sustainable food procurement. Improved animal welfare is clearly related to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.³⁷

#Moving towards 'less and better' animal-source food in combination with higher plant-based food content

Public procurement can contribute to increasing animal welfare by ensuring that a growing proportion of animal products are produced through implementing higher welfare standards, following the principle of "less and better" animal-source food. Criteria for higher animal welfare standards should be accompanied with requirements for a larger share of plant-based food, since it means fewer animals are raised intensively.

#Supporting farmers to move to sustainable practices

An increased share of plant-based food, such as beans, pulses, fruit and vegetables, can also provide the economic possibilities for investing in better animal-source food for the smaller amount of animal products that are still procured while driving the transition to agroecological farming by stimulating and rewarding farmers and businesses committed to high animal welfare standards.

#Moving towards an enhanced method of production (MoP+) label

For farmers who move towards higher animal welfare practices, there is no harmonised animal welfare method of production (MoP+) label that covers all species and their entire lifetime. The EU organic label is currently the only standard, and is thus recommended, as the animal welfare criteria for public procurement until an EU-wide Method of Production (MoP+) label for animal welfare is established.

How to get there

- EU citizens value animal welfare and state their willingness to pay for higher standards but are hindered by a lack of transparency and choice.³⁸ There is a clear demand among consumers for information about animal welfare for all animal products.³⁹
- A mandatory and harmonised enhanced MoP+ label would make it possible for public procurers to verify fulfilment of higher animal welfare criteria across all EU countries.⁴⁰ Currently, EU-wide mandatory method of production labelling only exists for eggs.
- Encourage public institutions and local governments to set targets for more resilient and short food supply chains, promoting reduced consumption of industrial animal products in combination with an increased share of plant-based food. The lack of information on the method of production of animal products makes a strong point for increased procurement of plant-based foods.
- Help producers in their transition towards practices that prioritise animal welfare with training courses, advisory services, financial incentives, etc. As well as those who are transitioning to more plant-based production. Producers who are in a transition mode should also be able to bid for public tenders.
- Raise awareness among public authorities about the positive impacts sustainable food procurement, with specific criteria for animal welfare, have on small-scale farmers, the environment, public health, and the wellbeing of animals.
- For monitoring:
 - Having a precise threshold of a percentage of animal products carrying an animal welfare enhanced MoP+ label, once established.
 - Monitoring tenders: frequency, farmers involved, producers who have the MoP+ labels.
 - Mapping the producers of the region that follow good practices.

³⁷ Keeling, L. et al. 2019. [Animal Welfare and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). Frontiers in Veterinary Science. 6:336. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2019.00336>. See table 2.

³⁸ European Commission. 2016. Special Eurobarometer 442: [Attitudes of Europeans towards animal welfare](#).

³⁹ European Commission. 2022. [Study on animal welfare labelling](#). Directorate General for Health and Food Safety, DG SANTE.

⁴⁰ See Council of the European Union. [Conclusions on an EU-wide animal welfare label](#). Brussels, 7 December 2020.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & RESOURCES

GLOSSARY

HFSS Product Profiling (HFSS) stands for products High in Fats, Sugars and Salt. WHO nutrient profile model classifies and ranks food with the scope of preventing disease and promoting health. WHO clearly states that such a model can help to prevent marketing to children of unhealthy food products. For instance, the model assesses that marketing to children should not be permitted for more than 100g of products such as desserts, juices, energy drinks, and ice cream.

This is not the only model available, but it is a good point of reference to ensure the health of citizens, not only children, is better guaranteed through procuring food products that are not HFSS.

Market engagement & stakeholder's dialogue are public engagement activities that aim to increase interaction between the public buyer, suppliers, and other stakeholders in the procurement process. They can consist of different levels of interactions, such as market research, meet the buyer conferences, field trips to food producers. Through market engagement & stakeholder's dialogue, a public buyer can communicate needs, and suppliers can provide feedback on tender specifications.

Multi-level governance is broadly defined as a process in which different levels of the government from local to global, as well as policy departments and stakeholders groups including private sector and civil society are included in decision-making processes, which as a result foster interconnected rather than silos policies.

Plant-based diets are consisting mostly or entirely of plant-based foods. Plant-based diets, such as the Mediterranean or the New Nordic Diet, contain low amounts of animal products and high amounts of plant products such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, herbs and spices. Plant-based food should preferably not include ultra-processed products. (See, for instance: FAO and WHO. 2019. Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles. Rome)

Plant-based food: food of non-animal origin.

Primary food: any article of food, being a produce of agriculture or horticulture in its natural form.

Small-scale farmers: In the absence of an EU definition, the Manifest defines small-scale farmers as those with a turnover up to 100,000 euro, a maximum agricultural area as defined by the concerned EU Member State for small-scale farmers and type of agriculture, and up to five 5 employees beyond family members. For more information: EPRS Briefing *Small farms' role in the EU food system* European Union, 2022.

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