

StratKIT  Sustainable
Public Meal
Toolkit

StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit

*for greener public procurement and
catering services in Baltic Sea Region and
beyond*

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Preface

Innovative Strategies for Public Catering: Sustainability Toolkit across Baltic Sea Region (StratKIT, www.stratkit.eu) is an Interreg BSR project (#R088) under the programme specific objective for advanced Baltic Sea Region (BSR) performance in non-technological innovation based on capacity innovation actors.

Project partners from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Poland and Russia representing public authorities, catering organisations and its associations, SMEs and research institutions (all together 13 partners and 10 Associated Organisations) have been working closely together in years 2019-2021 to offer empiric support for sustainability activities for public meal providers.

The project builds on a participatory research approach that has enabled dialogue and knowledge exchange among stakeholders dealing with the public meal in the Baltic Sea region. Due to this approach, the project's main output, the StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit, has emerged as an innovative toolkit intended to support actions that lead to an enhanced sustainability of the public meal. The StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit is available here www.sustainable-public-meal.eu. The toolkit is available online for the next five years and, available in English, Estonian, Danish, Finnish, German, Polish and Russian.

The website www.stratkit.eu is the entry point to reports, conference proceedings and other materials from the project and, the BSR network. There are multiple resources available at the StratKIT website including supportive readings and a collection of Best Practices. The latter provides illustrative examples from the public sector in the BSR region of actions that enhance the sustainability of the public meal. Important outputs from the project are:

- [Joint Baltic Sea Region Report for Sustainable Public Procurement and Catering Services](#)
- [Baltic Sea Region Dynamic Sustainability Model for Public Procurement and Catering Services](#)

The participatory approach including national and international conferences and workshops has resulted in the StratKIT multi-actor BSR network [Network - StratKIT](#). The network connects stakeholders from public and private entities with a shared interested in sustainability actions and the public meal.

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Summary

Every day, more than 10 million meals are provided by the public sector in the countries bordering the Baltic Sea so, public procurement and provision of the meals are important for interventions or actions that may enhance the sustainability of public sector meals. Public procurement can motivate actions through the calls for tenders for food and catering services. Through the procurement procedure, public procurement officers connect directly with actors in the supply chain such as wholesalers, food producers and farmers and, companies providing catering services. With the updated Green Public Procurement criteria (GPP criteria) for food and catering services published by the EC in 2019 ([JRC Publications Repository - EU GPP criteria for Food procurement, Catering services and vending machines \(europa.eu\)](#)) it is clear that, public procurement is regarded as a significant factor for enhancing the overall sustainability of the European food system. Therefore, the criteria specified in the calls for tenders for food and catering services are of pivotal importance for motivating actors dealing with the public meal to take action for more sustainability.

There are many options for enhancing sustainability of public meals but it requires a change to current practices. Actions may be implemented to motivate change, to implement, or to monitor change in the public kitchen, by suppliers, or by civil servants. Policies that frame public meals such as strategies for using organic products or policies about children's food education are equally important for guiding a change in relation to the public meal and sustainability. Any change in current practices requires collaboration either at a very local scale as for example in a school, or in a wider context, for example the implementation of a national or regional strategy or initiative. Identifying opportunities for change and implementing actions to change current practices builds on decision making, finding appropriate partners for collaboration and training, and an engagement in the change process.

Making changes for more sustainable actions in relation to the public meal is not easy and much can be done through local initiatives. The StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit is developed to support the change process and provides a comprehensive set of tools that can be used to motivate, guide and facilitate actions that enhances the sustainability of public meals. The tools can be used by kitchen professionals, civil servants dealing with public procurement, supply chain actors, providers of catering services, policy makers, and others.

The tools are organised in eight Gateways, each representing a sustainability dimension such as organic food, healthy and plant-based meals, preventing food waste, or resource efficiency. The toolkit also includes tools that facilitate strategy making or support public procurement officers to include sustainability criteria in their calls for tenders. In addition, the toolkit provides support for communication actions and for strengthening supply chain collaboration with particular emphasis on connecting with farmers. The complete toolkit is available in six languages on www.sustainable-public-meals.eu.

1 Introduction to the StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit

1.1 Setting the scene

The ambition of the StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit is to inspire, motivate and support change to achieve more sustainable meals in the public sector. The scope of the report-at-hand is to present the StratKIT Sustainability toolkit (hereafter mentioned as Toolkit) with its collection of tools. This report differs from the online toolkit by explaining about a variety of sustainability dimensions that public meals could deploy for changing current patterns (Chapter 2). Making changes may be a complex process and involves many actors, this is discussed in Chapter 3. This way, Chapter 3 also identifies the main user groups for whom this Toolkit is intended for. All tools are organised in Chapter 4. The final Chapter 5 explains about the participatory approach that underpins this Toolkit.

The United Nations have formulated the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\)](#)) with the intention to make these Goals a lighthouse for people, organizations and governments for increasing global sustainability. The SDGs address a range of sustainability topics as for example food security, education, clean water, economic growth and a health environment. Many companies, governments and organizations have taken to these SDGs and have aligned policies, strategies or actions accordingly. This indicates that the public sector as well as business have identified a need to thinking and acting for achieving a higher level of sustainability.

The public sector in Europe is recognized for its importance as an engine for driving change. This is particularly due to the procurement power of the public sector in economic terms as well as scale. Every day, more than 10 million public meals are served in the Baltic Sea Region. Food procurement accounts for ca. 25-30% of the costs for a meal in the public sector, the remaining costs are mainly labour costs, transport and other costs. These numbers illustrate how important public food procurement is for the European food system and, the impacts that may be imposed on food chain actors (farmers, distributors, food producers and providers of catering services). Public procurement and catering services therefore have a high purchasing power, and a broad range of people benefit from public meals. The transformative power of public meals can be a game-changer towards a more sustainable food system in this region and beyond. Public meals can contribute to achieving multiple aims on policy agendas, from the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the EU's Green Deal, and help to realize, through the Farm to Fork Strategy, climate, biodiversity, and zero-pollution ambitions, as well as official nutritional intake recommendations. The StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit offers innovative approaches to help trigger this change.

1.2 Delivering the public meal

Public meals are offered for a wide range of customers in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR), from kindergartens and schools, hospitals, elderly care, canteens in governmental and municipal offices, to armed forces and prisons. The organisational structures of public meals provision are presented in the following diagram, Figure 1. Public authorities can play the role of both procurer and caterer (**in-house catering**) or outsource the catering service to external contractors (**contract catering**). The external contractor can be either a publicly or privately owned company providing catering services. In the last half-century, there has been a general

shift away from in-house catering towards contracting private catering services in the BSR, especially to provide meals in schools, hospitals, and nursing homes.

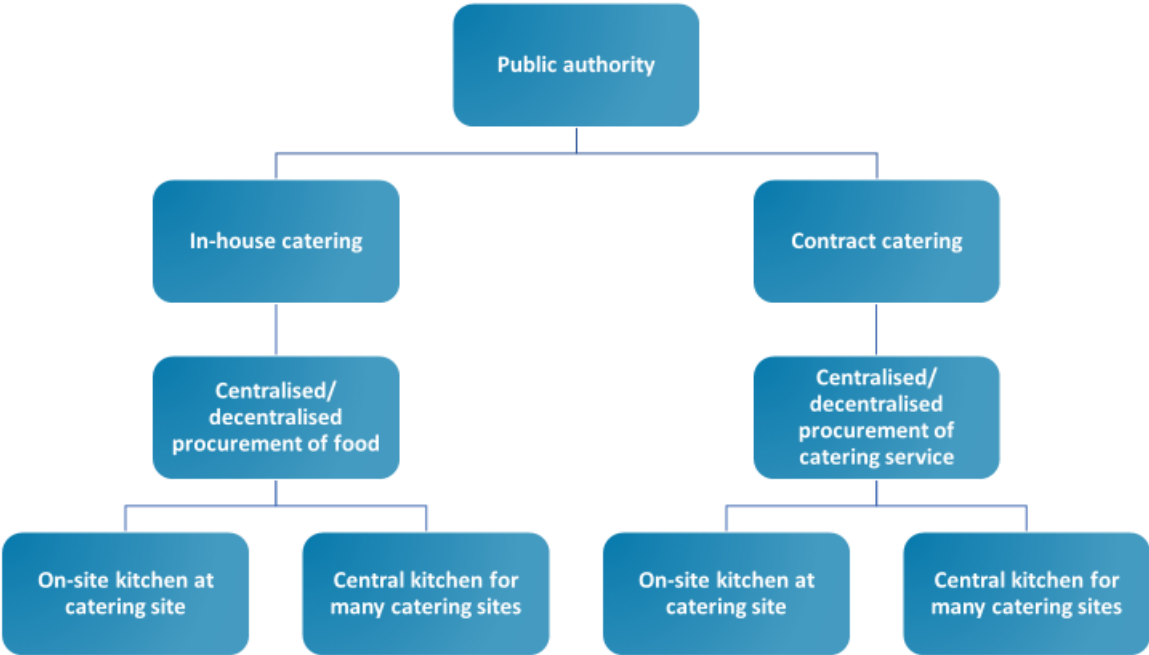


Figure 1: Organisation structure of the public meal

Traditionally, public educational, health and welfare institutions in the BSR have **on-site kitchens** in their buildings, allowing meals to be prepared on the spot and delivered ready to eat. Systems where food is prepared either partially or fully in a **central kitchen**, and then transported to other foodservice locations represent an emerging trend. Central kitchens may provide hot meals (*cook and serve*), chilled pre-cooked meals to be heated up for serving (*cook and chill*), or compose meals from pre-processed cold components to be cooked at the site (*cook cold*).

On-site cooking can often allow for more flexibility in menu development and quicker response to changing demand, resulting in less food waste. While centralised kitchens can save on labour costs by enabling the caterer to employ fewer kitchen professionals, there are generally additional transportation costs. Food manufacturing on a larger scale may also require the purchase of more specialised kitchen equipment to enable the production of specific menu items.

1.3 Public procurement of food and catering services

Before a meal in the public sector can be provided to the customer, it requires a call for tender published by the public procurement officer, and businesses handing in their bids for the contract. The contract may be for procurement of food, selected items of food, or provision of catering services. According to EU regulations, call for tenders above a threshold value of 139,000 EUR ([Public tendering rules in the EU - Your Europe \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/europa.eu/public-tendering-rules-in-the-eu-your-europe)) must be published as open calls for tenders that any business in the EU can place a bid for. However, many calls for tenders are below this threshold value and can motivate smaller businesses such as farms or local distributors to bid.

Public authorities (e.g., institutes at the state, regional or local governance level) either procure and cater the food themselves, or procure the catering service for public meals. The procurement in both cases can be centralised or decentralised. This means that the public authority can conduct procurement for all (or a group of) catering sites under its governance (**centralised procurement**). In the case of **decentralised procurement**, each institutional catering site either procures and caters food or procures catering services for itself.

Public procurement procedures include several steps: to write and publish a **call for tender**, assess the tenders from the **bidders** (suppliers), select one or several suppliers, draw up a contract with the supplier(s), and monitor compliance with the contract. The **tendering authority** (procurer) and its procurement officers are responsible for the call for tender.

In both procurement models (centralised/decentralised), the procurer must have in-depth knowledge of the catering and menu planning requirements. However, human resources can often be used more efficiently when the procurement is organised centrally. Central procurement of larger volumes of food can also often secure advantageous wholesale prices and delivery conditions, as well as a wider choice of raw materials. On the other hand, decentralised procurement enables better engagement of smaller food suppliers and more diverse offerings, reconnecting the customers to local producers and reducing food miles.

In the BSR countries, the practice of financing public meals provision ranges from zero to full subsidisation, with diverse specific arrangements. In the case of partial subsidies, the **state** and/or **local government** may cover some of the meal provision costs or, for example, offer kitchen premises, equipment, and dining areas for free to the catering service provider. A full subsidy by state and/or local government covers all costs for food, materials, energy, kitchen premises, dining areas and personnel needed for the meal provision.

Additionally, in the educational sector of the EU countries, the distribution of fruits, vegetables, and milk to pupils receives funding from the EU budget. For example, the combination of national school lunch allowance, local government, and EU support makes it possible to offer free-of-charge hot meals to all pupils every day in Finland, and Sweden.

2 Sustainability avenues for the public meal

2.1 Goal – enhancing sustainability of public meals

Public meals are provided by the public sector for citizens in specific institutions like schools, hospitals, nursing homes, or prisons. They are part of the **food supply chain**. The food supply chain includes food production (agriculture and fisheries), processing, distribution, preparation, consumption, and disposal. All these steps use up various resources and create environmental, social, and economic impacts. They provide food, create jobs, emit greenhouse gases, and affect biodiversity due to land use and agrochemicals. The sustainability of public meals depends on the sustainability of the supply chain.

This in turn depends on questions such as, is the food supplied healthy and nutritionally adequate? Are the salaries fair? Are greenhouse gas emissions reduced to a minimum? Is biodiversity protected by certain agricultural techniques?

Sustainability is about acting in such a way that the need for resources tomorrow is not compromised by what is done today. The United Nations formulated the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to motivate people, businesses, and governments to innovate and act to achieve them. In the EU, the Green Deal presents an ambitious approach to achieve sustainability goals by climate protection, the circular economy, zero-pollution, biodiversity, the Farm to Fork Strategy, and mobility policies. Food supply chains, and with them public meals, play an important role as they relate to several of the goals.

Ideally, **sustainable public meals** meet dietary, socio-economic, environmental, ethical, and taste requirements, and are prepared by adequately skilled and paid professionals who use resource-efficient techniques. While this might sound like an unattainable ideal, a lot can be done. For example, environmental and social aspects can be included in procurement activities; dietary choices can be shaped to mitigate climate impact from production and trade; diversification in food items can benefit biodiversity; procedures to help boost the circular economy or resource-efficiency can be implemented; social aspects such as education and working conditions can be addressed. So, there are many opportunities for changing current practices towards more sustainable public meals.

Figure 2 illustrates how the regulatory framework and market (the roots) connects with the procurement administration (the trunk) resulting in diverse operations connected with the production and provision of the public meal (the branches and leaves). In essence, the Tree model (developed in StratKIT; reference by Figure 2) shows on the one side the structural rigidity and durability of meals in the public sector, and on the other side, the many opportunities for diversification, hence sustainability dimensions. This way, the Tree model identifies action points for making changes to achieve a higher level of sustainability.

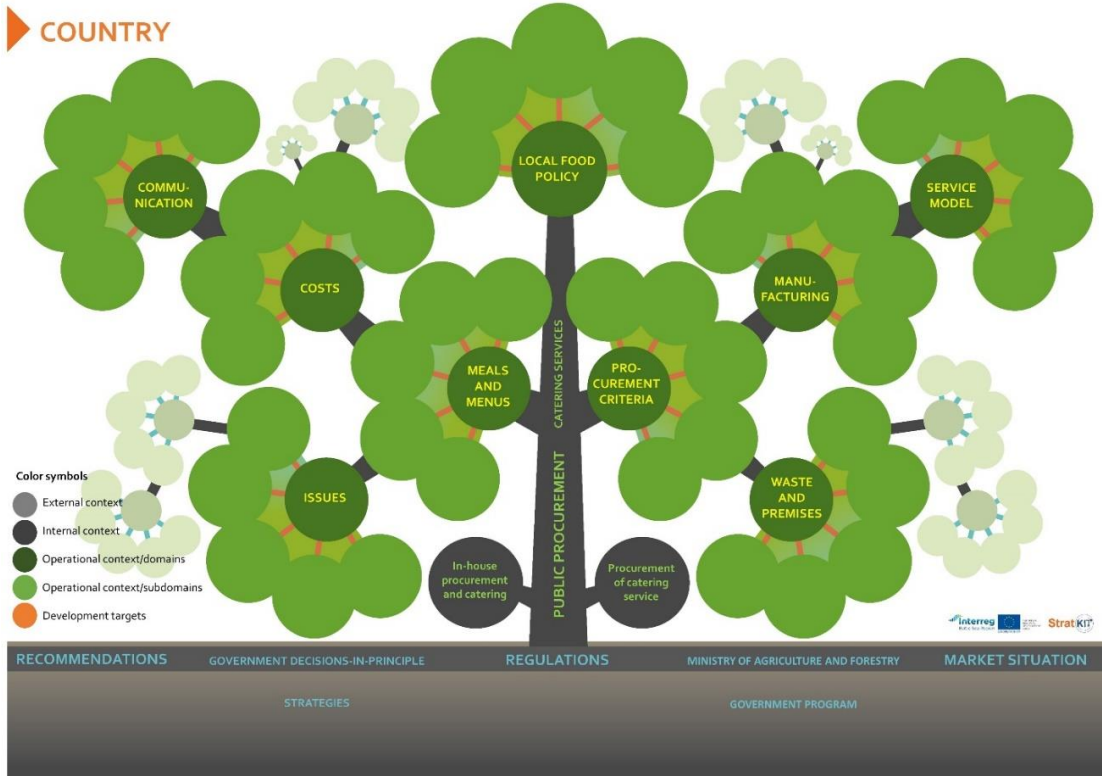


Figure 2: The Tree Model and sustainability dimensions of the public meal¹

¹ Retrieved from [Baltic Sea Region Dynamic Sustainability Model for Public Procurement and Catering Services, 2020](#)

2.2 European policy context for sustainable public meals

Public meals are influenced by several policy areas. The most important ones in a sustainability context are those related to food, public procurement, climate change, and use of resources. Common goals across these policy areas include promoting greener agriculture, supporting a dietary change towards healthier eating, and encouraging efficient (and circular) use of resources. Public procurement and changes in catering services can be used as a tool to achieve these goals. In this section, the most important international and European policies are mentioned. The policies mentioned below are important for framing the sustainability dimensions that impact public procurement and public-sector meals. Information is provided about which Gateways (refer to 2.3) to search for tools that can support implementation of changes to align with the policy topics.

The United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals**

At the global scale, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set the direction for all policy fields towards sustainability. For each of the 17 SDGs, targets and indicators were defined to monitor progress. The most important ones concerning more sustainable public meals, are goals #2, “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, and #12, “(achieve) sustainable consumption and production”. One of the targets in the latter goal is to promote sustainable public procurement (#12.7). Find some tools to address these goals in the Gateways Public Procurement; Organic food, and Strategies for change.

The **European Green Deal**

This strategic EU document sets the framework for a fair transition towards a greener and climate-neutral Europe. The Green Deal addresses policy areas targeting the climate, resource efficiency, ecosystems and biodiversity, regional and rural development, mobility, and trade relations with third countries. The EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Circular Economy Action Plan, Farm to Fork Strategy, and the ban on single-use plastic are all rooted in the European Green Deal. The Gateways Strategies; Resource efficiency and Communication and capacity building have tools that underpin actions in line with the Green Deal.

The **Farm to Fork Strategy**

This strategy (https://ec.europa.eu/food/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en) aims to comprehensively meet the challenges of sustainable food systems and recognizes the connections between healthy people, healthy societies, and a healthy planet. The Farm to Fork Strategy addresses urban-rural food relations, safe food for all, healthy diets, inclusive supply chains, and a push towards organic farming and climate-friendly food chains. It even suggests minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement for public institutions. The Gateways Organic food; Healthy and plant-based diets and, Working with farmers provide tools to make public meals more sustainable and climate-neutral.

The EU **Action Plan for organic production in Europe**

This plan, (https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/organic-farming/organic-action-plan_en) takes the previous plan for organic farming and food consumption forward to 2030. The aim of the new Action Plan published in 2021 is to have 25% of EU farmland assigned to organic production by 2030. To achieve this goal, the Action

Plan encourages actions to promote consumer demand for organic products and for including organic products in public and private catering services. The benefits of expanded production and consumption of organic products include more environmentally friendly agriculture, higher levels of animal welfare, increased biodiversity, and a positive impact on human health. The Gateways Organic food; Public procurement and, Working with farmers offer tools to facilitate the procurement and use of organic products in public meals.

The Circular Economy Action Plan

This strategy document encourages more efficient use of available resources with the aim of achieving climate neutrality and reducing the climate footprint of contemporary production and consumption patterns. The plan aims to foster collaboration and entrepreneurship to generate new business models and partnerships. The Circular Economy Action Plan provides a future-oriented agenda for achieving a cleaner and more competitive Europe. Furthermore, it addresses the need to reduce food waste and the use of over-packaging as well as encouraging biobased materials. The Gateway resource efficiency and Gateway Food waste provide tools to facilitate your work in relation to public meals and the goals of the Circular Economy Action Plan. The Gateways Resource efficiency and Food waste provide tools to facilitate changes in public meals to meet the goals of the Circular Economy Action Plan.

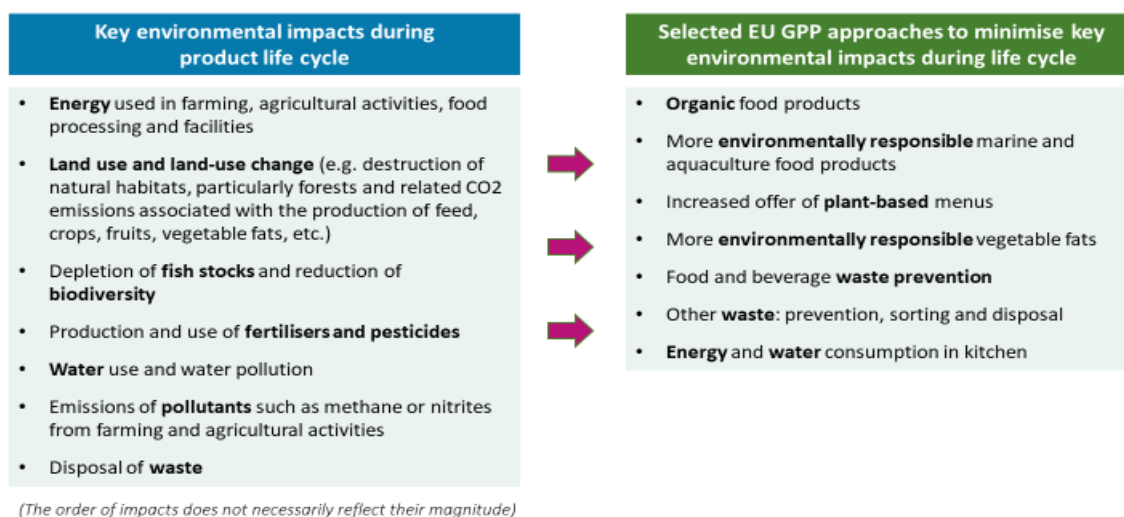
EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria

Public procurement as a whole represents 14 % of the EU's GDP (EU Circular Economy Action Plan, 2020) and can serve as a powerful driver of demand for sustainable products. This makes public procurement a key area of focus in sustainability policies like the Sustainable Development Goals, the Farm to Fork Strategy, and the Organic Action Plan, and prompted the creation of specific Green Public Procurement criteria. The GPP criteria and targets were developed to help public procurers tap into this potential. GPP criteria of special relevance for public meals are those related to the procurement of food and catering services. By using the GPP criteria, public procurement can have a direct impact on changing practices and therefore also for enhancing sustainability actions by suppliers in the food chain or by actors in the public or private catering entities. Figure 3 shows how environmental impact from public meals may be reduced by using the GPP criteria in public procurement.



EU citizens as public meal consumers²

²Captured from StratKIT Online Toolkit Video <https://youtu.be/49kEpZF7v7k>



Source: EU green public procurement criteria for food, catering services and vending machines (2019) ([Link](#))

Figure 3: Example of how GPP criteria connects directly with sustainability issues³

The left side in Figure 3 shows the key environmental impacts of the product group food, catering services and vending machines through their life cycle, from production to disposal. On the right side are the approaches included in the GPP criteria to tackle these impacts. The procurement of public meals can be done at different levels (from purchasing food only to full-service catering). This has been taken into account in the development of green public procurement criteria so that public procurers can select the criteria based on their procurement needs. The criteria usually follow the sustainability ambitions that are defined at the organisational level. Food supply chains can be very complex and diverse, and the organisation of food provision as well as the procurement models vary considerably. This needs to be taken into account when planning and executing the procurement of public meals. The GPP criteria can be found here: (https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_gpp_criteria_en.htm).

3 The change process and the public meal

3.1 Actors involved in delivering the public meal

Once the food and drink items are procured, these products are delivered to the kitchens that manufacture (cook) the meals. The meal manufacturing is carried out by skilled food professionals in central kitchens or kitchens located within a public institution as for example a kitchen in a school. After cooking the meal, it is served to the customers. This service can be organized as a buffet service, the meals could be offered as a portioned meal (think of schools or hospitals), or in other ways. The essence is that more staff groups are involved in accessing the products, cooking the meal, serving the meal, and cleaning up. With requirements from the procurement authority to include measures that raise the sustainability level, the staff

³ Retrieved from [EU criteria - GPP - Environment - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_gpp_criteria_en.htm)

groups involved in the provision of the meal must consider what actions they would need to implement to comply with this requirement. As an example, a requirement from the procurement authority for using more organic produce could mean that the menus had to be changed, that the kitchen staff would need to learn new working routines, or that new supply chain relations had to be established. The example illustrates that, in order to comply with requirements for more sustainability, collaboration and action are fundamental elements by all actors.

The structures and routines of the public sector for providing meals to the customers are complex and, in most situations, also quite rigid. This means that changes with a wider impact or of larger scale are commonly introduced from the procurement authority. The intended changes to a higher level of sustainability are achieved by requesting bidder's compliance with procurement criteria in the contract. This approach induces a cascading effect through the bidder's supply chain network and, this results in a wider impact on the food system.

However, new ideas or routines do often occur by practitioners in public kitchens, in the distribution system, or by other actors in the food system. Such ideas could initiate a new collaboration leading the formation of a new supply chain. Think about how to include farmers as suppliers to a local school; an approach that could reduce transportation distance or expand the kitchen's use of seasonal produce. It could well be that a kitchen manager introduced a way to make left-over food available to charity organizations or as a take-away solution. Here, the sustainability measure is targeted at preventing food waste. Both examples demonstrate how action can lead to change.

In many public institutions, the manufacturing and serving of the meal is undertaken by a contracted private company, the provider of catering services. Similarly, to procurement of food, the contracting authority can include requirements for sustainability measures in a contract for catering services, for example requirements for using food items without palm oil. Then, the catering company has to demonstrate compliance by for example presenting invoices for procurement of required food items. The catering company may also have a sustainability strategy of its own to underpin its competitiveness. Using energy efficient kitchen equipment, or communicating year-round about sustainability efforts could well be such sustainability elements in a company strategy.

It is clear that provision of sustainable meals in the public sector is a complex issue and that many parties are involved. However, it is also evident that the public meal is a potent topic in a sustainability context holding much potential for change through strategic and operational approaches.

3.2 Changing current practices take time

It may be inspiring yet fearing to engage in a change process: There are visions guiding towards the ideal situation or solution and, there are decisions to make and actions to implement, Figure 4. Change takes time hence, what is decided today may appear as a change in the near future or much later.

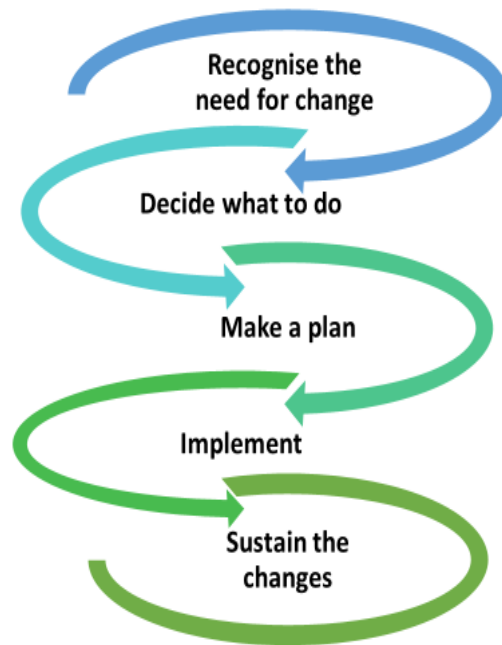


Figure 4: Model of the change process

Thinking of changes in the public sector it is obvious that a change process would involve several staff groups and decision makers, each with own responsibilities and competencies. This indicates that a change process should be regarded as a series of decisions that impact on diverse staff groups in various ways. As change takes time, it is important to underpin the motivation by the involved people to drive the change process and to monitor its progress. Thus, appropriate leadership is essential. The StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit provides support for several aspects of the change process: support to implement monitoring of e.g, food waste prevention, support to elaborate and implement a strategy for making changes, or setting up commissions to lead changes.

A successful process of change requires collaboration within an organisation or among more organisations. This might lead to conflicts as there could be contradicting motives for the proposed change. For example: if budget for public meals is cut down and requirements for e.g., organic food in the calls for tenders, then there is a situation that could induce a conflict between contracting authority and contractor. Another example could be that the kitchen professionals in a public kitchen take pride in preparing plant-based meals, but the customers are reluctant to change to more vegetarian dishes. In both the mentioned examples there are more staff groups involved and the decisions made have an impact on the sustainability of the public meal. In the first example, the requirement for organic food links well with an increased sustainability of the food production, however there is an issue of conflict linked with the procurement. For this example, the StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit can provide support for the menu planning with organic products and proper procurement of organic products. For the other example, the toolkit provides support for presenting plant-based menus to customers (senior citizens) or for inclusion of farmers into supply chains targeted at the public meal.

3.3 The strategic and operational elements of the change process

Once the goal for the change process has been defined, the appropriate actions need to be planned and implemented. There is no single solution for the strategic approach to the change process as the local context must be taken into account. This means, that a strategy or action that has been defined for e.g., a school in country A does not necessarily work for a school in country B. However, there may be some of the elements in the strategy or action that are useful for both schools. This could be for example ideas of whom to involve in the change process, or information about how to use sustainability criteria in a procurement process. The toolkit provides such support.

Defining a strategy, or the strategy process itself, requires the involvement of decision makers (for example government of a municipality) and those who would implement the actions (for example kitchen staffs in schools or in the elderly care homes). However, there may be more levels of governance and so actors, to be taken into account for the decision making, Figure 5.

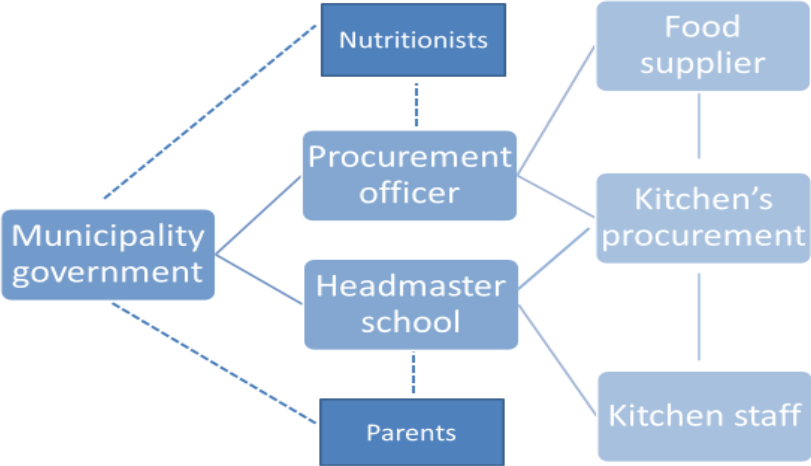


Figure 5: Actors involved in decision-making about the public meal – example of school meals

Figure 5 shows that decisions about meals in schools involve as decision makers: the local government, civil servants (for procurement and management of the school) and, management in the kitchen (for procurement of food and managing production). Kitchen staffs and suppliers are subject to decisions made at more governance levels hence, with their main role being as providers of meals and food products, respectively. It is evident from Figure 5 that, the procurement officer has an implementing function in the sense that decisions from the policy makers must be reflected in the calls for tenders.

The kitchen’s procurement of food must be adapted to the food strategy of the school and the assigned budget. The kitchen’s procurement of food is a decision-making function (i.e., choice of products to procure and sometimes also choice of supplier). The complexity of the decision-making process in relation to sustainability changes for the public meal points to an important aspect: actors do not have clear roles, but collaborative partnerships. To facilitate the use of the StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit it is indicated what stakeholders are considered to be the most important users for each tool (Chapter 4).

Parents and nutritionists, in the example of school meals, influence the decision-making process (marked with dotted lines in Figure 5). Parents may join a school meal board or vote for local policy makers. Nutritionists may provide recommendations about diets such as a reduced intake of meat and more vegetarian meals. This way, stakeholders that are not directly involved in the decision-making can have a significant impact on the change process for more sustainable meals in the public sector.

Decision-making is one element in the change process however, implementation and sustaining changes are equally important. Due to the structures of the public meal (refer to 1.2), experience from the StratKIT project points at incremental or local changes as the way forward for more sustainable meals in the public sector. This means that changes that can be managed and implemented within existing structures are more likely to happen than radical new ways of procurement or production of meals in the public sector. The existing structures in the premises (e.g., kitchens, equipment, serving areas), in the supply chain (e.g., the wholesalers, other suppliers, farmers), and in the market (e.g., providers of catering service, providers of meal solutions) therefore set the frame for what kind of day-to-day changes that could be envisioned, particularly in a short-term perspective.

Implementing changes requires a collaborative approach across staff groups. For example, when menus change to include more plant-based food items, it requires that the procurement function can access such products. This implies to collaborate with supply chain actors like wholesalers, farmers or food producers to ensure supplies of relevant food items. Menu changes may also require additional skills by the kitchen professionals thus, a need to collaborate with providers of training for professionals or meeting up with colleagues from other kitchens in the public sector to learn from their experiences.

As there are many staff groups involved in the production and serving of the meals in the public sector (refer to 1.2) it is therefore essential to take a holistic approach to planning, implementing and sustaining changes. All relevant staff groups from the top-level management and policy agents to professionals working to provide and serve the meal play a role for making change happen, each within their specific area of competence and impact.

4 StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit

4.1 Getting started with the Toolkit

Each Gateway holds a collection of tools but some tools are relevant for several Gateways. It is up to the User to decide about what tools to use, and for the User to select and combine from more Gateways the most appropriate tools for the planned action. Each tool is structured according to the topics listed below:

The origin of the tool.

Each tool in the toolkit is elaborated by one of the StratKIT partners, so the collection of tools represents experiences and findings from Finland, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Estonia and, Russia (St. Petersburg).

Intended users.

Here, it is indicated what user groups the tool would be most useful for. The core users of the toolkit are foreseen to be policy makers, public procurement officers, managers of catering companies, kitchen professionals, or other stakeholders. Due to the generic appearance of the tools, there may be more user groups that could make use of the tool, for example providers of education and training, nutritionists, providers of equipment, or media.

Tool in a nutshell

This section explains how the action proposed in the tool relates to various dimensions of sustainability (chapter 2), and how procedures related to public meals (especially procurement and meal provision procedures) could be adapted with the overall aim of achieving a higher level of sustainability.

Steps to be taken.

This section explains in ca. 10 action points what steps that needs to be taken to organise, implement or monitor the proposed action. Due to the generic appearance of the tools, it may be necessary for the user to adapt to the local context and given resources.

More issues to consider.

This section provides information about relevant partners to collaborate with for implementing the action, and other practical information.



The Toolkit can be used by variety of professionals and authorities ⁴

⁴Captured from StratKIT Online Toolkit Video <https://youtu.be/49kEpZF7v7k>

4.2 Gateway Strategies for change

The sustainability of public meals is a complex issue, with environmental, economic, and social impacts to be considered. The tools in this gateway provide guidance on how to effectively address this complexity. This gateway includes tools specifically designed for decision makers, customers and suppliers making the change in collaboration as they think about, choose, and decide upon more sustainable ways to provide public meals. These tools provide not only strategies, guidelines or action plans in themselves, they may also feature recommendations towards the establishment of new institutions which can help drive strategic change. Those tools can be implemented not only by policymakers, but also by other decision-makers in catering enterprises, public bodies, or public procurement.



Strategies are important for initiating and sustaining changes⁵

List of tools in this gateway

- [School Nutrition Council](#)
- [How to conduct a strategy process](#)
- [Sustainability aspects of the public meal](#)
- [Roadmap for developing sustainable catering](#)
- [Getting involved in a change process](#)
- [Networking office for healthy and sustainable meals](#)
- [Setting up the canteen commission](#)

⁵ Photo retrieved from [Don't Act Until You React: 5 Strategies to Build Mental Preparedness to Lead Change - Training Industry](#), trainingindustry.com

School Nutrition Council

Origin of the tool: Russia

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool offers a participatory approach to dealing with nutrition and healthy food issues in schools. The school nutrition council involves all relevant stakeholders working together to improve school meals and increase their sustainability. This tool aims to develop school meals through the operation of a participatory school nutrition council. This body may include key school employees such as principals and teachers, catering company representatives, public authorities, customers (pupils), and their parents. The nutrition council has regular meetings, and it supervises meal provision, customer satisfaction with menus (over longer periods), and organises open day events. The nutrition council may also suggest improvements to meal provision on a wider scale.

Steps to be taken

- Setting up a school nutrition council starts by inviting key stakeholders, such as the principal or assistant principal, health officer, nurse, head of the canteen, the representative of the catering company, and young people and their parents to work together.
- This work can include learning about public meal provision, nutritional recommendations, the quality of food items prepared into meals, the origin of the ingredients, and the share of organic ingredients in their menus (over several, and at least two, weeks).
- This work can also entail supervising the quality and quantity of the meals against standards and surveying customer satisfaction.
- The nutrition council may discuss and debate improvements to be made in meal provision.
- The nutrition council may act as a liaison between the many actors involved in public meal provision.
- The nutrition council may also collect, record, and publish information about the various aspects of public meal provision.

More issues to consider

- Sometimes high expectations cannot be met in the short term. It would be advisable to seek gradual short and medium-term improvements.
- Sometimes strong differences in opinions call for compromises.
- Increased collaborations can lead to new, innovative ideas and processes.

How to conduct a strategy process

Origin of the tool: Finland Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

Public procurement and catering organisations need to operate more sustainably. This tool provides general guidance on conducting a strategy process for more sustainable public meal provision. A strategy process helps the organisation be receptive to different sustainability aspects and then agree on concrete actions depending on the context. A strategy process is suitable for both public and private businesses/ organisations. This process may involve the organisation alone, or be implemented in collaboration with relevant partners. The process often needs EU, national, and municipal sustainability strategies and policies as landmarks to help achieve the process's aims.

Steps to be taken

- The management shapes the vision as a starting point for the strategy process; *“where do we want to go?”*
- A strategy group is formed with representatives of the organisation (and relevant external stakeholders) to carry out the tasks of the strategy process.
- The strategy process itself begins with gathering relevant internal and external information such as facts, numbers, regulations, potential partners, and EU, national, and municipal strategies and policies, along with further ideas for developments.
- Prepare and present the relevant material at meeting(s) in the strategy group. Be sure to have an agenda and decision points ready for the meeting. Discussions are facilitated (and moderated) about the content of the strategy; *“what are we going to do, how will we do it, and who will do what?”*
- The means, the costs, and a timetable are agreed upon for implementation. Present the strategy for management of the organisation.
- Write a strategy document to compile the aim, means, costs, and timetable, and assign responsibility for the implementation. Monitor and report regularly (i.e. monthly/ annually) on the progress of the implementation.

More issues to be considered

- Sometimes the strategy process may be started through the initiative of external actors, policy and decision makers, or even customers.
- The strategy process is essentially a learning process based on dialogue and collaboration.
- Some participants in the strategy process may not be familiar with the framework and operations of public procurement and catering services, and therefore may need extra support for discussions. Participants should always feel comfortable and informed enough to offer ideas and views on developments.
- The strategy process may involve many discussions and meetings. Be prepared to bring in external experts for relevant aspects, e.g. legislation. It may be necessary to adapt the strategy document during its implementation.

Sustainability aspects of the public meal

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Procurers, caterers, others

Tool in a nutshell

The sustainability of public meals is a substantial issue that has many aspects. How can we start taking steps towards increased sustainability when there are so many aspects (food sourcing, labour resources, etc.) to think about? This tool helps users to step back and take stock of the many different areas of potential for improved sustainability in the provision of public meals. The tool is relevant for managers and kitchen professionals and provides inspiration for organizational efforts towards increased sustainability. Further inspiration for finding potential areas for improved sustainability can be found in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the EU's various sustainability policies.

Steps to be taken

Plan your organisational efforts by choosing sustainability aspects from the list of items below. Implement your choice in a way that fits your own operational context. Areas for improved sustainability and some of their aspects:

- **Food:** healthy food and (nutritionally) balanced meals and menus, organic food, plant-based food, climate-friendly products, vegetarian diet, vegan diet, biodiversity, animal welfare, and sustainable fisheries.
- **Supply chains:** transparency in economic and legal dispositions, short supply chains, fair competition, reduced transportation distance, food safety, reliability and trust, and food security and communication. Further sustainability aspects may relate to regional sustainability developments, local food culture, and heritage food.
- **Work:** fair payment, transparent and safe working conditions, competent management, personal development, career paths, and equal opportunities (gender, age, background).
- **Customers:** comfortable and friendly eating environments, tasty and healthy meals, fair or (partly) subsidised prices, free meals, and transparency about food items/meals (for example, organic certification or information about the origin of the food or presence of allergens).
- **Stakeholders:** collaborative activities, involvement through discussions and consultations, co-creation, and communication.
- **Efficient use of resources:** efforts in saving water, electricity and chemicals, using environmentally friendly chemicals, reducing single use plastics, and avoiding food waste as well as recycling redundant equipment. When reconstructing or building new kitchens, plan cooking methods (cook and serve, cook and chill, cook cold) and serving modes (portions, self-service) as effectively as possible in terms of using resources.

More issues to be considered

- The “sustainable meal” is an ideal worth working towards. Go step by step and use your learning resources. Share your successes, even small ones. It is important to stay focused and alert to changes in social and regulatory attitudes and developments in the area of sustainability.

- Many sustainability recommendations, labels and programs exist, and a number of tools can be found in this sustainability toolkit and on other sites. New, (co-)creative, and local aspects in alignment with the concept of sustainability can be introduced into public meal provision, such as bread baked from heritage grains.

Roadmap for developing sustainable catering

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration

Tool in a nutshell

This tool explains the process towards the development of a roadmap for sustainable school catering. Public catering and the foods they provide are increasingly becoming part of environmental policy and may also contribute to the environmental objectives of local governments. Moreover, public interest in the sustainability of food production, as well as the provision of tasty and healthy school food, is growing. It is therefore important that the principles of and pathways towards school and kindergarten catering are defined and agreed upon at the local government level. Organising high-quality and nutritious meals in city-managed schools and kindergartens should be a strategic process with a targeted and systematic approach that can be compiled into a roadmap.

Steps to be taken

Assessment of the current situation and needs for change:

- Summarise the outcomes of recent and ongoing projects and other initiatives contributing to sustainable catering in educational institutions. Estimate the demand for and the supply of sustainable catering.
- Evaluate the needs in the supporting organisational structure and resources within the city procurement system as well as the education department (e.g. existing capacity and competencies, need for training in green public procurement, etc.).
- Identify areas in which schools need support and help, including in verifying the fulfilment of environmental criteria related to school catering.

Set goals and targets:

- Define the goal(s) for the reduction of the environmental and climate impact of healthy and tasty school food in the dialogue with experts on food, nutrition, and health and sustainability, as well as public procurement. Integrate the goal(s) into the city's overall ambition for sustainability and green public procurement.
- Agree on measurable targets to reach the goal(s) step by step.

Develop an action plan:

- Plan activities to achieve the targets. Pay particular attention to stakeholder involvement (schools, parents, caterers, procurers, etc.) in implementing sustainable catering. Place emphasis on food-related education and support capacity-building of school catering stakeholders (caterers, menu planners, cooks, etc.).
- Link the action plan with ongoing projects/initiatives to ensure consistency and exploit synergies for enhanced impact.
- Allocate budget and resources.

- Assign a coordination team that takes responsibility.

More issues to consider

- The roadmap for sustainable catering in educational institutions can be developed as a thematic roadmap, as part of a strategy for public catering, or can be integrated into a broader framework strategy, such as the action plan for carbon neutrality or education.
- It is very important that the city has a vision and understanding of where it is heading in terms of public catering services.



A sustainable public meal involves all actors of the food chain ⁶

⁶Captured from StratKIT Online Toolkit Video <https://youtu.be/49kEpZF7v7k>

Getting involved in a change process

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

How can practitioners, like caterers or procurers, be motivated to implement sustainability measures for public meals? This tool aims to produce communication materials which can be used to help motivate practitioners, such as caterers or procurers, to adopt sustainability measures for public meals. To help inspire their motivation for change, the experiences and best-practice advice of other practitioners are collected and shared. The circulation of insights and advice from colleagues can be important elements on the path to implementing a change process.

Steps to be taken

- Define the aim of the communication, e.g. to get kitchen professionals to change their menus to a more climate-friendly selection, or to encourage them to pay more attention to water-saving practices.
- Find practitioners who have relevant stories and experiences to share. Organise an interview appointment with each of the practitioners to listen to their experiences and gather recommendations for best practices. Share the topics/questions of the interview with the practitioner in advance so that they can adequately prepare.
- Listen carefully and attentively during the interview. Show your willingness to hear more. Take notes or record the interview, if the practitioner agrees to it. Summarise the key findings using good examples and recommendations. Consider collecting a few facts and statements from other stakeholders involved in particularly good examples of best practice.
- Collate the findings from all interviews and publish them in an appealing brochure. If applicable, consider hiring a graphic designer to help create the publication. Print and distribute it and/or publish the pdf online.
- Make sure the publication is distributed to all the relevant practitioners you wanted to reach from the start, like all public kitchen professionals.

More issues to consider

- It is recommended to use the tool in connection with other schemes focusing on communication and strategy processes, and to include this tool as part of a broader communication plan.
- It may be a good idea to organise a helpdesk to underpin the change process.
- Include plenty of ideas for action to help the change process along, such as capacity-building, and establish relevant networks.

Networking office for healthy and sustainable meals

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Policy makers, public administration

Tool in a nutshell

The networking office provides information, guidance, and training, and supports the sharing of experiences among relevant stakeholders involved in public meals for young people. It mainly focuses on health and sustainability issues. The aim of the networking office for kindergarten and school meals is to simultaneously address health and sustainability issues. It is established to provide information, guidance, and training, and to support the sharing of experiences among relevant stakeholders involved in public meals for young people. The primary benefit of the networking office is its ability to provide a forum for coordination for a wide range of public meal stakeholders, in alignment with EU health and sustainability policies.

Steps to be taken

- Set up the networking office as a programme, project, or new entity within your organisation.
- For the basis of your work, identify the terms of and guidance for healthy nutrition provided by official or expert organisations.
- Identify and connect with existing resources and stakeholders committed to healthy food, catering services, and sustainable nutrition education in day care institutions and schools.
- Support the exchange of information, arrange regional advisory services, and promote intensive networking and the sharing of experiences among stakeholders through:
 - workshops for decision-makers;
 - consultations with school teams;
 - advanced training courses and upskilling initiatives for professionals;
 - working advice and tips on the homepage or in newsletters;
 - answering questions on the topic by telephone or via email;
 - developing further web applications or digital tools.

More issues to consider

- Changes in kindergarten and school meal provision are long-term processes.
- Building and sharing knowledge about public meals for young people, generating action towards sustainability, and forging connections with various stakeholder groups are the chief driving forces of the networking office.
- Changes in food culture or food perceptions may take a long time.
- The participation of all stakeholders (kindergarten and school authorities, teachers, caterers, and parents) is important in developing clear, relevant, and sustainable concepts for the supply of daily meals.

Setting up the canteen commission

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool helps to organise a working group, called a “canteen commission”, made up of various stakeholders in a public catering facility. The commission is a contact point for all issues related to the canteen, including awareness-raising about sustainability issues. The canteen commission is especially important for building bridges between the customers of the canteen, the service provider, and the (public) authority responsible for the catering services. The group meets regularly to discuss initiatives and monitor progress. The commission functions as a contact point for all issues related to the canteen, including awareness-raising about sustainability issues, and can help drive innovative changes to and evaluation of meals and menus. It can also help to increase transparency in decision-making processes by enabling a forum for communication and strategy development. The commission may support extensive sustainability policies through their work.

Steps to be taken

- Identify the relevant stakeholder groups important for the creation of the canteen commission, and invite potential participants as representatives of their organisations and competences.
- Together, create a concept for the canteen commission to be shared with the management of the organisation. The concept should aim to answer the following questions:
 - What are the aims for the commission (e.g. improved transparency, more customers, more sustainability, etc.)?
 - What are the tasks at hand; what needs to be done (e.g. communication on canteen matters, changes in the operation, customer survey, educational events, etc.)?
 - Who else does the group need to achieve its goals (e.g. contracting authority, caterer, procurer, customer representative, etc.)?
 - How often and under which circumstances does the canteen commission meet (e.g. twice per year for about 2 hours)?
 - How are the meetings organized (e.g. clarify who chairs the meetings, how decisions are made, how meeting minutes are kept, and who receives the minutes)?
- Decide on a chair person to lead the canteen commission.
- Clarify what power(s) the canteen commission’s decisions have; are they only empowered to give recommendations, or can they make implementable decisions? Agree on the communication structures for the canteen commission.

More issues to consider

- The canteen commission is an ideal forum to look for solutions to all kinds of issues arising between customers and the providers of catering services. Minutes from

meetings are an important record of what has been agreed upon. Define the deadlines for decisions; no reply means agreement.

4.3 Gateway Public Procurement

Public procurement has considerable potential to improve the sustainability of food production and consumption both directly and indirectly. The sizeable market share of public meals allows the public sector to drive demand for sustainable products and services and lead by example. Public procurement for sustainable meals includes offering healthy and tasty food with lower environmental impact, reducing food waste, and raising customers' awareness of more sustainable eating habits, as well as using eco-labelled chemicals and goods in catering services. It can positively impact sustainability strategies and policies such as climate protection, the circular economy, health and wellbeing, sustainable agriculture, mobility, and economic relations with other countries. The tools in this Gateway mainly offer guidance in terms of procurement criteria which suggest which kind of products to procure. These criteria work in alignment with Green Public Procurement criteria. Some tools are meant to support procurement officers in setting up tenders more easily or finding potential suppliers; others are more strategic tools to transform public food procurement itself.



Public procurement of food following a sustainability strategy⁷

List of tools in this gateway

- [Procurement criteria for catering plant-based food](#)
- [Procurement criteria for lower climate impact](#)
- [Procurement criteria for sustainable soy](#)
- [Procurement criteria for consumable goods](#)
- [Procurement criteria for organic food](#)
- [Procurement criteria for sustainable palm oil](#)
- [Procurement criteria to reduce food waste](#)
- [Checklist for sustainable catering service procurement](#)
- [Procurement criteria for recyclable food packaging](#)
- [Administrative regulation for sustainable public procurement](#)
- [Tender template for sustainable catering services](#)

⁷ Captured from StratKIT Online Toolkit Video <https://youtu.be/49kEpZF7v7k>

Procurement criteria for catering plant-based food

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Procurers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool guides procurers in integrating plant-based options into the public procurement of catering services, based on the EU's Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria. Increasing plant-based consumption and reducing meat and dairy consumption can have a positive impact on health, biodiversity, and the climate.

Steps to be taken

There are two criteria models to choose between, which can also be used in combination:

Technical specification (minimum criteria):

- Menus offered must include options which increase the consumption of pulses, vegetables, fruits, whole grains and nuts while having at least the same recommended nutrient intake for the clients, including [*to be selected by the procurer*]:
 - X% of vegetarian food (vegetables, beans, grains) must be part of everyday lunch dishes with meat and fish.
 - X number of vegetarian or plant-based dishes (which includes eggs and dairy products but eliminates meat and fish) per day(s)/per week.
 - X number of vegetarian or plant-based dishes to be offered daily or Z days per week.
 - Vegetarian or plant-based dishes to be offered X number of days per week.
 - 'Dish of the day' to be a vegetarian or plant-based dish.
 - X grams of plant-based sourced proteins or pulses per day or week.
- Verification: The tenderer must provide the menu planning with the alternatives that promote the consumption of pulses, vegetables and fruits. This must be in accordance with the established nutritional requirements.

Award criteria (for giving proportionally additional scores):

- This can be applied to tenders in which the tenderer organises, together with the school, awareness-raising activities for pupils on the importance of vegetarian food for a balanced diet. Verification: The tender must provide a description of the proposed awareness-raising activities.

More issues to consider

- Adding more vegetables to familiar lunch dishes (e.g. creating minced meat and vegetable balls, or chicken and vegetable sauce) makes children more likely to be receptive to these healthier options. Cooperation with nutritionists helps raise awareness on the health benefits of a balanced diet among schoolchildren, their parents, and teachers.
- Some of the challenges of this option are measurability (whether and how much cooks increase the proportion of vegetables in the food) and novelty (since new recipes need to be developed).
- Serving school lunches which contain more vegetables for all pupils once a week is logistically less complicated and less expensive than offering an alternative vegetarian option every day. Moreover, in the latter case, vegetable-rich school lunches may not

reach those who need them most (i.e., over-consumers of meat). The menu planners and cooks may require extra training to deliver this newer, healthier menu.

Procurement criteria for lower climate impact

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Procurers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides procurers with options to procure food with lower climate impact through shorter supply chains and preferring seasonal food. A short food supply chain means short(er) physical distances between producers and consumers, which typically lowers transport emissions. Seasonal products are generally delivered over shorter distances. Seasonal vegetables with better taste, quality and prices can also promote the shift of the menu towards more plant-based meal options, contributing to a climate-friendly and healthy diet. Thus, increasing the share of seasonal food delivered at short distances helps to reduce the climate impact of food production and consumption, possibly the procurement cost, and to improve the quality of fresh food, which all support the health and climate protection policies of the EU.

Steps to be taken

If a procurer wishes to purchase food with lower climate impact through shorter supply chains and prefer seasonal food, the technical specification of the catering service should determine:

- **The distance of food production in kilometers and for which food items** this requirement applies. **Which seasonal food and drink products are to be delivered at what time of the year.** Seasonal products are usually fresh fruit and vegetables that ripen during certain seasons. The procurer could use the following criteria in the procurement document:
- The following primary food products used in the preparation of meals [*procurer inserts the list of food*] must originate **within a radius of X kilometers** [*procurer inserts the number of kilometers*] from the place of consumption.
 - X% (e.g., 100% or at least 80%) of all **fruits** offered in autumn (September, October, November) [*to be determined based on the time when seasonal fruits are available in a country/region*] are X, Y, Z [*e.g., apples, pears and plums, to be determined based on the availability of seasonal fruits*].
 - X% (e.g., 100% or at least 80%) of all **root vegetables** offered in autumn (September, October, November) [*to be determined based on the time when seasonal root vegetables are available*] are X, Y, Z [*e.g., fresh carrot, beetroot, turnip, celeriac to be determined based on the availability of seasonal vegetables in a country/region*].

Verification: The tenderer will provide:

- A list of producers of the required primary products. The contracting authority will verify the fulfilment of the short supply chain criterion in the contract based on delivery notes/invoices of food purchases. A list of potential seasonal products that will be provided. The contracting authority will verify the fulfilment of the seasonality criterion in the contract based on delivery notes/invoices of food purchases.

More issues to consider

- According to EU public procurement directives, the public procurer cannot set a condition that producers or products should be "local" or "domestic", which imposes discrimination and unfair treatment of other EU suppliers. The aim of determining the distance where the primary products must originate is to reduce the climate impact of transporting food. Tips: considering the climate impact, the distance of food supply chains could be up to 300 km. Both animal products, such as eggs, milk, meat (chicken, pork, etc.,) and plant products, such as fruits and vegetables, are suitable for the short supply chain requirement.

Procurement criteria for sustainable soy

Origin of the tool: **Denmark** Intended users: **Policy makers, procurers, caterers**

Tool in a nutshell

The aim of this tool is to support public procurers to include criteria for responsibly produced soy in the procurement of food, drink, and catering services. The tool is relevant for procurements where soy is the main ingredient, for products where soy is included indirectly, and for meals offering soy-based dishes. By asking suppliers (either food suppliers or caterers) to meet these criteria, procurers help increase the demand for responsibly produced soy and raise awareness about environmental and health aspects of producing and consuming soy.

Steps to be taken

Adapt and implement the following into your call for tender:

- As part of the offer, the supplier must prepare an action plan for phasing out non-certified soy used in food or intended for food preparation.
- The action plan should include a section on how the supplier will encourage his/her suppliers of meat, eggs, dairy products, and farmed fish to only purchase responsibly produced soy as fodder, as well as a description of what steps will be taken, and a timeline.
- The implementation of the action plan will be followed up at progress meetings with the contracting entity.
- The first status meeting will feature an update on how many products have been offered to the contracting entity (procurer) containing soy and how many of these contain certified soy (e.g. RTRS-certified).
- If not all the products are certified as RTRS (or equivalent), an action plan will be presented, outlining how the supplier will work to ensure that the remaining soy products contain RTRS-certified (or equivalent) soy.
- Regular follow-up meetings with the supplier helps to ensure progress.

More issues to consider

- The tool motivates procurers to turn to their suppliers to push demand for sustainably produced soy. This way the tool has an impact on the whole supply chain, including a wide range of processed foods and drinks.
- European farmed soy is available as RTRS-certified or equivalent.

Procurement criteria for consumable goods

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Procurers

Tool in a nutshell

Find adaptable procurement criteria for the reduced use and impact of chemicals and consumable goods in the public procurement of catering services in this tool. This tool provides guidance to set out criteria for reduced use and impact of chemicals and consumable goods in the public procurement of catering services, based on the EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria. The tool provides the minimum criteria for technical specification and award criteria for this purpose. Its implementation positively impacts on water quality, biodiversity, waste reduction, and climate protection.

Steps to be taken

In preparation for public procurement, market consultations are carried out on the supply of eco-labelled chemical products and consumable goods. When preparing documents for procuring catering services, the criteria below can be included to ensure the procurement of environmentally friendly chemicals and consumable goods. These criteria are based on the EU's GPP criteria for food and catering services. There are two criteria models to choose between, which can also be used in combination:

Technical specification (minimum criteria)

- Non-disposable tableware (such as plates, mugs, glasses, cutlery), gloves, and tablecloths must be used on a general basis.
- At least X% of chemical products for handwashing, dishwashing, and routine cleaning used in catering services must meet the requirements of an EU Ecolabel for that specific product or its equivalent.
- At least X% of consumable goods (kitchen rolls, kitchen paper, napkins, etc.) used in catering services must meet the requirements of an EU Ecolabel for that specific product or its equivalent. Note: exemption from the ecolabel requirement may be granted if no eco-labelled products are available on the market.
- Verification: The tenderer must supply a list of disposable and non-disposable items, chemical products, and consumable goods used in the execution of the contract, clearly indicating which products comply with the criteria.

Award criteria (for giving proportionally additional scores)

- This can be applied to tenders in which more than the required % of the purchases of chemical products and/or consumable goods meet the requirements of an EU Ecolabel for the specific product or equivalent.
- It can also be applied to tenders in which: cleaning agents and hand soaps are dispensed by an automatic dispenser or dosage pump; other actions are taken to significantly reduce the consumption of chemical products, such as steam cleaning; the kitchen is equipped with paper or fabric hand towels.

Verification: The tenderer must supply information about the dosing systems and dispensers to be used as well as their maintenance (if needed) in the execution of the contract.

Procurement criteria for organic food

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Procurers, policy makers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides schools and municipalities options for incorporating organic food criteria into the procurement of catering services. It is based on the EU's Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria for food and catering services. The implementation supports, amongst others, the EU policies for biodiversity, clean environment, and Farm to Fork policies.

Steps to be taken

- In the preparation phase for public procurement, market consultations on the supply of organic products are crucial.
- Publish the call for tenders to find a catering service provider 8–9 months before the beginning of the school year. This ensures that the contract will be awarded early enough to guarantee the sufficient supply of organic food.
- Organic food provision can be included in the procurement documents as a qualifying criterion (minimum requirement) or award criterion (score-based).
- The organic food criterion in a technical specification (minimum requirement) can be set either as a percentage of total raw materials or as a percentage of specific food groups, for example:
 - At least X% of the total purchases of food and drink products must comply with the requirements of EU organic label (Regulation (EC) No 2018/8481 or its subsequent amendments).
 - At least X% of the following food and drink products (which will be inserted by the contracting authority) must comply with the requirements of the EU's organic label (Regulation (EC) No 2018/8481 or its subsequent amendments).
- The procurement document must specify whether the percentage of organic food is calculated based on the value or weight. Calculating the percentage of organic food purchases in value gives more flexibility to offer organic food from different product groups. For example, it enables the purchase of more affordable seasonal products.
- The adherence to organic criteria, when they are set in procurement contracts, must later be confirmed by the contracting authority.

More issues to consider

- The proportional award criterion, which uses a score-based system for the use of organic food, is more complicated to verify during the implementation of the contract, due to its unique nature. For example, proportional award criteria could specify that the highest percentage of organic food products will get a maximum score (determined by the contracting authority), while each subsequent percentage gets a lesser score.
- If a school has not procured organic food before, consider starting with the minimum criterion and from a smaller share of organic products (e.g. 20%) in purchased raw materials. Do not set requirements for all food groups.
- If an organic catering eco-label exists nationally or locally, it simplifies the supervision of organic food offering in meals for the contracting authority. The state supervisory body will then check the catering service's compliance with the eco-label

requirements. The tenderer must confirm that the required level of the national catering eco-label will be obtained by a specific date. For more information, see the tool for creating an organic label for caterers.

- Central support from the local government is needed to help schools incorporate sustainability features into their catering service procurement. The development of a central verification system should also be considered to check the conformity of service with the terms set out in the procurement documents.

Procurement criteria for sustainable palm oil

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Policy makers, procurers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool supports public procurers by providing criteria on sustainable palm oil to be included in a call for tender for food or catering services. It also encourages procurers to require two certifications in their tenders; in this example, certification for organic AND responsibly produced palm oil. By asking suppliers (either food suppliers or caterers) to meet these criteria, procurers help increase the demand for sustainably produced palm oil and raise awareness about the social and environmental consequences following palm oil production, including deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Steps to be taken

Adapt and implement the following criteria into your call for tenders:

- Any palm oil used in food or intended for use in food preparation must not have contributed to the deforestation of primary forests and must include a double certification on both organic production and Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certification (or equivalent) within 12 months of starting the contract.
- As part of the offer, the supplier must prepare an action plan for phasing out non-certified palm oil used in food or intended for use in food preparation.
- The action plan may, for example, contain descriptions of steps to be taken first, how the supplier will work with their suppliers, and a deadline for when the supplier should have phased out products that do not conform with the required certification. This will be followed up at the status meetings with the contracting entity (procurer).

More issues to consider

- The RSPO has developed a certification system for supply chains ranging from palm oil plantations to end-users in industry (e.g. food, drink, and soap manufacturers).

Procurement criteria to reduce food waste

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Procurers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool presents procurement criteria designed to help motivate catering companies to take action to reduce food waste. The tool provides minimum criteria for technical specification and award criteria, based on the EU's Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria, for menu planning, awareness-raising, redistribution of surplus food, and collection of food waste. The implementation supports, amongst others, the EU's climate protection, circular economy and Farm to Fork policies.

Steps to be taken

When preparing the documents for procuring catering services, the procurer can include the following criteria to encourage food waste reduction. Procurers can choose between using a set of minimum requirements or award criteria, and use them singularly or in combination (the numeric values in the criteria are suggestions and can be changed according to specific rules, needs, and conditions of the procurer):

Technical specification (minimum criteria):

- 70% of the hot meals should be kept on the menu until the end of the school day. Explanation: this technical specification can help limit the number of food choices on the daily menu and lead to fewer menu options still available at the end of the catering service.
- At least one side dish (out of two or three) should be kept until the end of the school day. Explanation: this requirement can be used in combination with the previous criterion or separately.
- Salad ingredients, seeds, nuts, and salad dressing shall be served separately. Explanation: separate serving would allow certain salad ingredients to be used in the meals the next day, so long as the caterer follows the requirements for storage temperature and shelf life.
- Minor last-minute changes may be made less than three days before the food is served; e.g. 5–10% of the food items on that day's menu. Explanation: flexibility helps reduce food waste and make better use of the food products available on the market. For example, if there are plums left over from the previous day, they could be served the next day instead of the carrots currently on the menu.
- The caterer must sort bio-waste separately in the school canteen and kitchen, and install separately marked waste bins for food waste in the canteen for students and school staff. Note: this criterion can be applied to the sorting of other types of waste, such as glass, paper/cardboard, packaging, and mixed municipal waste.

Award criteria (for giving proportionally additional scores):

- This can be applied to tenders in which the catering service provider, together with the school, organises awareness-raising activities related to food waste reduction. The tenderer must give details on such activities. Note: lower scores can be given to information dissemination activities. Higher scores can be given to initiatives which

involve the active involvement of pupils, e.g. measuring food waste levels, cooking with children (link), or food waste reduction competitions with prizes.

- It can also be applied to tenders in which the caterer enters into an agreement with a Food Bank or other charities to donate the surplus food or offers other options to redistribute surplus food.

Checklist for sustainable catering service procurement

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers

Tool in a nutshell

The aim of this tool is to make the procurement of sustainable catering services easier for procurement officers by listing sustainability areas to be considered when formulating calls for tenders. The checklist, to be used in strict order, covers all the necessary points for procurement. Use of this checklist can help contribute towards several Sustainable Development Goals, and it supports EU climate and Farm to Fork policies.

Steps to be taken

The objectives of the procurement process are assessed and coordinated with the customer or canteen working group. The contract value and award type are determined. Market analysis may be necessary. Analyses can be obtained from a food industry cluster or association.

The tender should include:

- description of the canteen and, if necessary, general specifications;
- suitability criteria;
- performance criteria/ technical specifications;
- contract performance clauses;
- award/ selection criteria;
- further provisions and notices (e.g., termination).

Selecting performance criteria/ technical specifications with a positive impact on sustainability requires:

- use of organic products;
- use of fresh, regional and/ or seasonal products;
- use of sustainably certified fish and fish products;
- use of animal products that respect animal welfare;
- use of fairly traded products (e.g., coffee, tea, chocolate, cocoa, tropical fruits);
- use of sustainable vegetable fats and oils;
- reduction of meat consumption: offering equivalent vegetarian/vegan meals every day; plant-only menu days, reducing the amount of meat per dish and meal;
- no genetically modified ingredients;
- no artificial additives and taste enhancers;
- free provision of tap water;
- allowance for customers' allergies/religious/other requirements, and responsibility for the provision and labelling of alternative dishes;

- preparation, portion quantities, and labelling are to be performed in accordance with official recommendations for company/school/hospital catering, such as nutrient-preserving cooking, low salt and fat contents, low sugar contents, and standardised recipes;
- measures to avoid food and beverage waste: implement two portion sizes, prepare meals the customers wish for, takeaways, and pre-order systems; pass on leftovers (e.g., to food banks or food-sharing initiatives), create special offer dishes from the previous day, ensure regular monitoring and efficient stock-keeping;
- measures to avoid further waste: reusable/ deposit systems, no single-use packaging, large containers, recycled/ sustainability-certified paper products;
- use of cleaning agents: dosing devices, cleaning schedule and sustainable cleaning agents, training of kitchen professionals;
- food transport (if part of the job): short transport distances, fuel-efficient driving, use of commercial vehicles with low emissions of air pollutants;
- energy and water consumption of kitchens: energy-saving appliances and energy-optimised use, use of renewable energy, purchase of new resource-saving appliances;
- environmental management measures: annual monitoring and evaluation of waste, energy, and water consumption, etc., and implementation of appropriate measures;
- communication: canteen working group, feedback box, survey among kitchen professionals;
- training of kitchen professionals;
- possibility to provide catering to customers other than the contracting institution;
- preference for social enterprises or organisations (e.g. working with handicapped people) in awarding contracts.

More issues to consider

- The checklist is mainly based on already-existing tenders and sustainable procurement criteria for public catering services. Nevertheless, all criteria need to be checked with the relevant legal department(s). The use of regional products must be integrated in a way that follows market regulations.

Procurement criteria for recyclable food packaging

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool encourages procurers to include a criterion in calls for tenders for the use of recyclable plastic packaging, like PET. Plastic packaging is a recognised method for preserving food quality and mitigating food waste. Rice, pulses, meat, dairy products, and other food products will often be delivered in plastic. By including a criterion on the use of specific types of plastic packaging, a procurer can help create a trend that may impact the whole supply chain by encouraging suppliers to deliver products packaged in recyclable plastic. The tool could therefore be a significant way to help reduce plastic waste.

Steps to be taken

- Create a call for tender which includes a full list of the food(s) you plan to procure (“list of food”).
- As an awarding criterion, include PET packaging and define its share of the total award criteria (e.g. “PET packaging counts 5 % of the total award criteria in the tender”).
- Define how the bidder gets points. For example, points could be awarded according to how many of the products from the list of food the bidder delivers in PET packaging instead of other plastics.
- The procurer then assesses the packaging criterion by counting the number of product lines marked with PET packaging, each line giving a score of 5 points.

More issues to consider

- The tool is most relevant in a context where appropriate recycling systems have been established. The tool works best in situations where (often larger) kitchens have procedures for sorting waste.

Administrative regulation for sustainable public procurement

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool can support a public administration's environmental aims by including them in administrative regulation for public procurement, making them binding for public institutions. The details of the regulation are agreed upon within the administration and included in training material for implementation by public procurement officers.

This helps qualitatively improve the tendering process and can lead to consecutive environmental solutions by bidders, particularly with respect to public meals. The public administration, by adopting this regulation, further aligns with ambitious environmental policies such as those for climate protection, the circular economy, waste management, and biodiversity set by the EU.

Steps to be taken

- Create administrative regulation which outlines environmental principles and aims which can be matched with environmental procurement criteria.
- Create specifications for tenders in which, amongst others, the necessary sustainable criteria for the procurement of the public meal are defined, and the means of tracking compliance are outlined.
- Examples from Berlin's specifications for tenders:
 - At least 15 per cent (of the monetary input) of the foodstuffs used, in relation to the total input, originate from organic farming in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 834/200719.
 - 100 percent of fish and other marine products originate from sustainable fisheries/ fishing, or sustainable aquaculture.
 - 100 percent of the coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate originate from organic farming in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007.
 - At least one organic food component (e.g. potatoes or vegetables) is offered daily.
 - If there is a choice of two or more menus per day, at least half of them should be vegetarian.
 - The standard range of foodstuffs (e.g. sugar, milk, jam, mustard, etc.) should not be served in portion packs.
 - Only reusable tableware (including beverage cups for cold and hot drinks) may be used, with the exception of cardboard packaging.
 - For plastic reusable tableware, high-quality environmentally friendly plastic, e.g. polypropylene or polycarbonate, should be used.
 - Food waste, fats and oils, waste glass, cardboard, paper, and light packaging should be collected separately and fed into the respective collection of recyclable materials.
 - Only napkins, kitchen rolls, and paper towels made of recycled paper which meet the requirements of the Blue Angel eco-label should be used. (These requirements are outlined in RAL-UZ 5, July 2014 edition, chapter 3).

- Only unbleached baking/cooking and hot filter papers (e.g. coffee and tea filters) which meet the requirements of the Blue Angel eco-label may be used. (These requirements are outlined in DE-UZ 65, February 2014 edition, chapter 3.)
- Further specifications define energy efficient fridges, ovens, etc., and the use of detergents, etc.
- Create and provide support and training material, like guidance documents, templates, and explanatory videos for the procurement officers.

More issues to consider

- The regulation applies to a wide range of products and services procured by public administration. Food, catering, and related issues make up only a small part of this. The regulation only applies to public catering facilities that are funded by the government (like school canteens). It does not apply to public canteens operated by private caterers receiving revenues from the customers only and no public funding.



Changes in current practices often require a team work⁸

⁸ Captured from StratKIT Online Toolkit Video <https://youtu.be/49kEpZF7v7k>

Tender template for sustainable catering services

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool explains how to gather a collection of workable public procurement criteria for sustainable catering services from relevant sources. These criteria can be discussed and negotiated with procurement officers, caterers, suppliers, and customers. The agreed criteria can then be included in a tender template for public procurement. The tool covers EU, national, and local municipal policy aims for sustainable development at large.

Steps to be taken

- Review the various existing sustainability criteria available for public procurement for catering services, alongside other criteria presented on the aggregate level (refer to chapter 2 for information at EU policy level)
- Bear in mind that sustainability criteria include, and may mix, social and economic criteria with environmental ones.
- Create a draft sustainable tender template based on existing tender formats by adding your chosen sustainable procurement criteria.
- Discuss the criteria with the respective contracting authority, procurers, caterers, and customers, and be prepared to negotiate if and when necessary.
- Procurement officers can then deploy these criteria when drafting a tender, and then legally review the obligation before including it in the final tender.

More issues to consider

- It requires skillful procurement to use sustainability criteria in a productive way. Criteria which are too tight may be counterproductive, as the market may not be able to respond to these tenders.
- Sustainability criteria may also change over the years as buyers and sellers aim at higher sustainability levels, as well as in accordance with changes in (procurement) regulation.
- It is of the utmost importance to legally review the template tender before starting the procurement in order to avoid legal challenges.

4.4 Gateway Communication and Capacity Building

As the issue of sustainability drives more meaningful improvements in the food system, it will create a need for changes in perceptions, policies and practices among various stakeholders. Awareness raising by all stakeholder groups involved in providing meals for public institutions is crucial for attracting attention to the variety of opportunities that public meals offer for pushing forward a sustainability-driven agenda. These stakeholder groups must be identified and made aware of the opportunities for change they hold. This requires a set of appropriate communication methods designed to meet the interests of different stakeholder groups. Changing practices often require new skills for the people involved. These could include stakeholder groups such as civil servants, decision-makers in public institutions or professionals in catering companies, policymakers in municipal bodies, or external knowledge providers. This gateway offers a range of tools that may help to shape communication, training and support functions to better adapt public meals to a sustainability context.



Staff capacity building activities⁹

List of tools in this gateway

- [Culinary workshops: Grow, Cook, Eat](#)
- [Create-your-menu game](#)
- [Sustainable diet training for public institutions](#)
- [Sharing sustainability information](#)
- [Campaigning and cooking for awareness raising](#)
- [Ideas for promoting Organic Cuisine Labels](#)
- [Training and networking for kitchen professionals](#)
- [Climate protection in school kitchens](#)

⁹ Captured from StratKIT Online Toolkit Video <https://youtu.be/49kEpZF7v7k>

Culinary workshops: Grow, Cook, Eat

Origin of the tool: Russia

Intended users: Caterers, teachers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool encourages sustainable food system developments by showing young people the connection between growing their own (or purchasing) plant-based food, and cooking enjoyable and healthy meals. This tool connects with the tool for, wherein edible plants are grown in small scales on school premises. In these workshops, restaurant chefs share their recipes, collaborate in cooking with young people, and explain the idea of balanced meals with teachers. Learning to grow (or purchase) and cook tasty plant-based food on their own encourages young people to learn about and engage with sustainable food systems which support international policies for public health and food security.

Steps to be taken

- A 2-hour plant-based cooking workshop for young people of 10-14 years of age is introduced into the school's curriculum. Teachers may invite restaurant chefs to share their recipes and participate in cooking enjoyable dishes with young people. Teachers and chefs may collaborate on health and sustainability education.
- The workshop schedule might give around 30 minutes to learn about recipes and health benefits surrounding plant-based food, around 45 minutes to cook, and about 15-20 minutes to taste all the dishes and to clean up the kitchen.
- This tool uses plant-based food items, which are either grown on the school premises as recommended by the tool "School gardening for sustainable food education", or purchased at retailers by young people.
- The recipes include plant-based ingredients such as sprouts, parsley, lettuce, cilantro (coriander), and others which can be grown in school premises. The weights and volumes of these school-grown plants may not be sufficient for full meals, but can be added-to by store-bought produce.
- A range of tasty dishes such as smoothies, different salads, and even a vegetarian pilaf (seasoned rice) can be prepared within the workshop schedule.
- At the end of the workshop each student receives a small booklet with botanical, health, and sustainability information about the products they have grown, along with a collection of recipes to share with their parents and cook at home.

More issues to consider

- Taste aspect can be effectively dealt with by educating about seasoning and spices.
- When organising a workshop on healthy plant-based cooking and eating, concepts such as plant-based food, and vegetarian and vegan diets can be explained, and nutritional advice offered regarding balanced meals.
- There may be additional costs for external guests (e.g., chefs or experts) presenting at the workshop. Alternatively, it may be possible to organise the event in collaboration with public institutes concerned with nutrition or cooking professionals, which may help mitigate costs.



Culinary workshop at school in St. Petersburg¹⁰

Create-your-menu game

Origin of the tool: Russia

Intended users: Caterers, teachers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides young people with visualised information about healthy and sustainable food consumption through a card game. Children can learn nutritional facts about food groups and their different food items (around 100), as well as about healthy meal compilation by using specific food item cards. Familiar meals are visualised as energy content and other nutrients (e.g., carbohydrates, proteins, fats, and vitamins and minerals), which can be compared against nutritional recommendations and adjusted to attain better results. Young people can work across a day's meals either independently, in pairs, in groups, or with a teacher. Improving knowledge of food consumption in relation to personal health and sustainability aligns with a wide range of international health and sustainability policies.

Steps to be taken

- Make the cards for about 100 everyday food items with information about the energy content (in kJ and kcal), the weight of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, fibres, vitamins, and minerals.
- Add special information about essential amino acids, essential fatty acids, and good or inadequate vitamin and mineral content if needed. Information about digestion and allergy issues can also be added.
- The children can pick up the cards for the meals they consume during an average day (i.e. breakfast, lunch, dinner, and supper, as well as morning and afternoon snacks) and calculate their nutritional intake.
- They can then compare their nutritional intake with the recommended values and try to make changes if needed.

¹⁰ Photo credits: School #126, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2021

- Pupils should discuss their results with teachers and think about future action to increase their consumption of healthy and sustainable food.

More issues to be considered

- Making the food item cards may create a lot of work and incur some costs.
- The cards are a graphic learning resource, and they offer memory support. The cards are durable and can be used in groups without electronic devices. The cards can also be supported by additional daily nutrition calculation programmes.

Sustainable diet training for public institutions

Origin of the tool: Poland

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers, others

Tool in a nutshell

How can we get everyone in a public institution on board for more healthy food and sustainable diets? One way is to provide a training program for all interested employees that includes cooking exercises, workshops and lectures. The aim of this tool is to enable all employees working in public facilities (like nursing homes, schools, kindergartens, etc.) to gain knowledge and experience in the provision of sustainable meals. This is reached by establishing an adequate, multidisciplinary training program for employees with different professional backgrounds to learn about the facts and practice the creation of sustainable meals. The training consists of plant-based culinary workshops, food waste awareness training and lectures about organic food and farming.

Organised by the municipality, the different training sessions can be provided by experienced chefs, food waste enterprises, dietitians, scientists and other relevant professionals. By providing more sustainable meals in public facilities, several of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 2030 are addressed, like health and wellbeing, responsible consumption and production, as well as climate action.

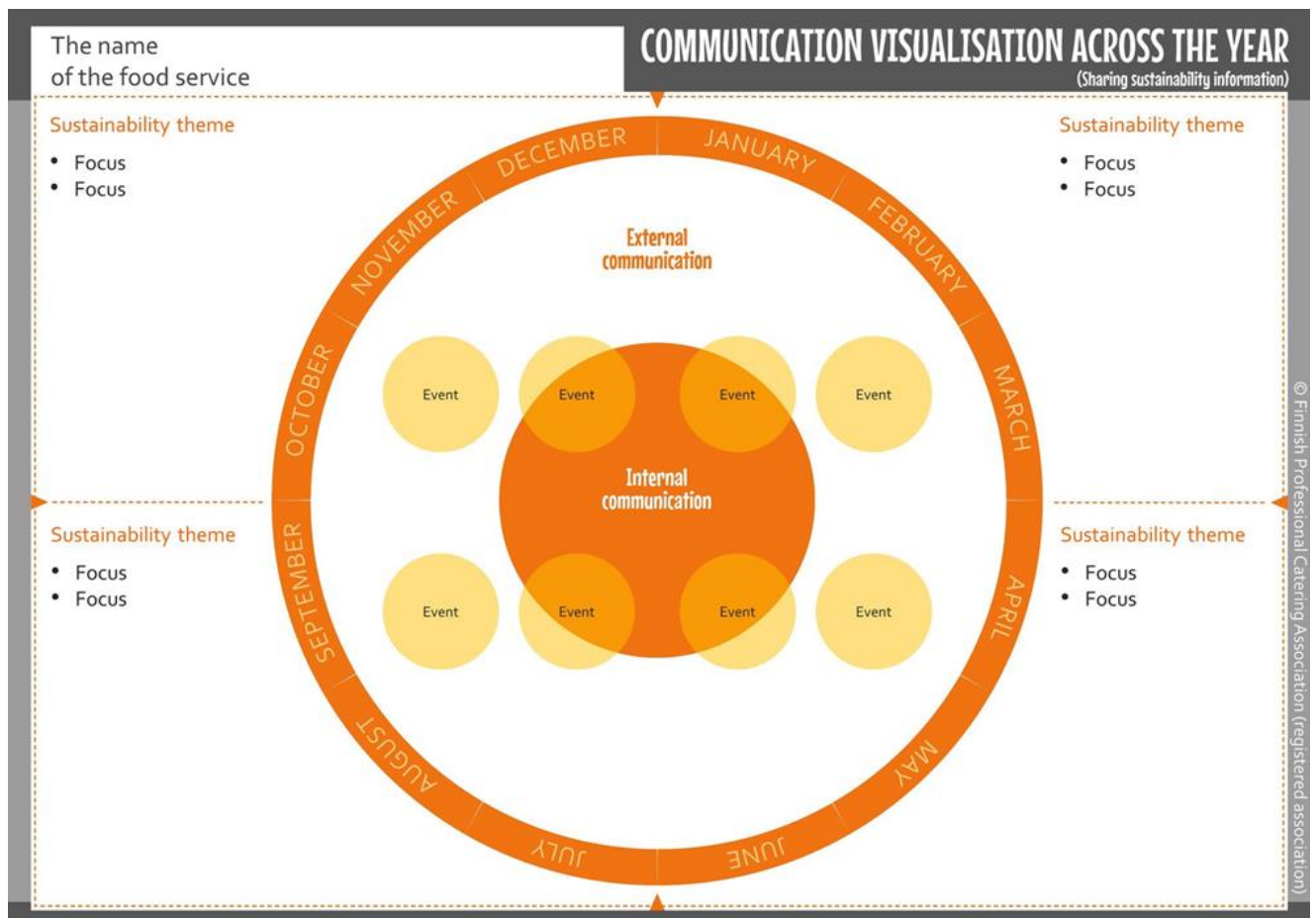
Steps to be taken

- Create an adequate training program on sustainable diets by meeting representatives from the municipality, the management of the participating public institution, scientists specialising in sustainable development and nutrition, and other relevant experts or stakeholders.
- Identify the main challenges with regard to sustainability in the participating institutions (like food waste, lack of organic and plant-based meals). Define a budget for the action. Choose experts to lead specific sections of the training, and prepare a schedule for workshops, with an agenda for each one.
- Invite employees from different institutions to participate. Keep a list of participants for every meeting, because they will receive a certificate at the end.

- At the beginning, start with a short, written test on what the participants already know about sustainable diets. You can repeat the test after the whole course to check the development of their knowledge.
- At the end of each training session, collect the participants' feedback. This will help to improve the program in the future.
- Consider monitoring the changes that happen at the different institutions after the training: Which measures are implemented? Which changes are permanent? Which changes didn't work out? What are the challenges? What are the future ambitions?

More issues to consider

- It's not possible to drive changes towards sustainability without the active and conscious involvement of all employees involved. Including a wide range of stakeholders, from volunteers to kitchen staff, helps raise the general awareness of the topic. This in turn underlines the importance of developing the necessary knowledge and skills amongst them.
- Practical culinary workshops are an important part of the training. Video and photo documentation is important for reports and media coverage.



Model for sustainability communication across the year¹¹

¹¹ Credits: Finnish Professional Catering Association AMKO, graphics by Kirsti Pusa

Sharing sustainability information

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Policy makers, procurers, caterers, others

Tool in a nutshell

Sustainability updates are an excellent way for canteens to present their efforts towards increasingly sustainable public meals, and for their customers to learn about this work. The tool helps to plan and make the most of communication opportunities within public procurement and catering services. This tool is about organising updates and other communications pertaining to public meals, reflecting the sustainability efforts made on-site, those in preparation, and the overall vision for sustainable meals within the organisation. Information campaigns can focus on ingredients, menus, personnel, energy and water consumption, waste reduction, and many other areas. Strategies for communication are numerous; they could take the form of topical messages delivered in printed or digital form, open-day discussions, or even demonstrations. This tool supports the dissemination of sustainability information across the calendar year, and aligns with EU strategies and policies for sustainability at large.

Steps to be taken

- To help craft your message, make a list of sustainability aspects that are important for and related to public procurement and catering services. The list may include aspects such as balanced meals, organic food, animal welfare, plant-based food, and vegetarian, vegan and fairly traded food.
- Your message may also include information about the origin, regional variance, and/or quality of the food. It may include supplementary information on possible activities, such as installing solar panel, new plant-based recipes, or new products made from recycled cloth.
- Make a list of the most important stakeholder groups to whom communication efforts should be targeted and list examples of relevant sustainability aspects for these stakeholders.
- Consider office colleagues and kitchen professionals as important partners for implementing communication efforts and explaining sustainability achievements. Be sure to map the different communication channels used (printed, digital, demonstrations, etc.).
- Research important events, periods, and local or national campaigns which can be connected with the communication efforts during the calendar year.
- Draw up a plan for a year's communication efforts entailing seasonal, monthly, or weekly messages about sustainability issues. Assign a budget to the communication efforts.
- Make sure that communication efforts targeted at important stakeholders as well as general public awareness campaigns are included in the annual plan.
- Carry out the planned communication campaigns and collect feedback. Relevant criteria may include the number of respondents to a campaign, number of visitors to a stand at a fair, number of downloads made, etc.
- Evaluate the communication campaigns held across the year and adapt next year's plan accordingly.

More issues to be considered

- It is important to share even basic changes which have been implemented, such as the serving of healthier food.
- Make sure that updates on sustainability achievements are shared in line with the organisation's overall communication strategy, and that the topics communicated are aligned. Always base communication on facts and personal experiences. This builds trust in sustainability campaigns.
- Be prepared to adapt the communication plan to exploit new opportunities which may arise; for example, the possibility of linking up with other institutions for joint events.
- Communication about sustainability efforts may also raise contradictory responses, as stakeholders perceive many aspects as sensitive.
- Building and maintaining dialogues supports developments in sustainability communication.

Campaigning and cooking for awareness raising

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Caterers, others

Tool in a nutshell

Schools have a unique role in teaching and shaping young people's values and attitudes. This tool helps schools raise children's awareness about food waste, acquainting them with school cooks and presenting the canteen work in an event ("Let's Cook Together"). It thereby offers an approach to tackling food waste and contributes to the EU's climate protection, circular economy, and Farm to Fork policies.

Steps to be taken

- Choose the schools where the "Let's Cook Together" event will take place. It is recommended to tour "Let's Cook Together" events across a number of schools during a single school year. Come to an agreement with the caterer and school canteen professionals regarding their participation in the campaign.
- Select the classes/children who will participate in the cooking. It is recommended to involve children from 4th to 6th grade.
- Create a poster for the campaign that promotes reducing leftovers. The poster can be displayed in schools outside those involved in the campaign as well.

During the event at school:

- The event at school starts with a discussion among children and food waste expert(s), focusing on why wasting food is a problem and what children can do to avoid food waste.
- The canteen cooks introduce the school kitchen equipment (which children can compare with home cooking devices), work processes, and jobs in the kitchen. The children then prepare creative dishes from the leftover food together with school cooks who guide and help them. The focus is on showing children how food leftovers can be reused to create new dishes. For example, a casserole can be made from side dishes boiled in the morning, such as potatoes, rice, or pasta; or a dessert can include peeled brown bananas.

- The children, based on the number participating, are divided into task groups of roughly equal size to help prepare the meal. When the dishes are ready, the children enjoy the meal together and discuss the outcome with their teacher and cooks.
- All children receive a certificate for participating in the event (*“for participation in cooking school”*).
- In addition, a video competition could be organised. The children would be encouraged to make one-minute videos about cooking together to be shared on social media (e.g. a Facebook group specially created for the campaign), which can be rated and commented on by fellow pupils.

More issues to consider

- According to teachers who have been involved in these campaigns so far, children love the food they’ve cooked together; some even eat more than usual, and others have enjoyed meals they would usually disregard.
- The involvement of local media (newspaper, radio or even TV) is encouraged to help boost the campaign’s profile in the local community.



Sustainable diet training in Rybnik, Poland¹²

¹² Photo credit: W. Troszka, Municipality of Rybnik

Ideas for promoting Organic Cuisine Labels

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

Labels or certificates for public catering facilities and restaurants are used to inform consumers that organic food accounts for a certain share of the menu. As the aim of these labels is to raise awareness of customers and stakeholders, there is a need for promotional materials. This tool provides ideas to help the relevant authorities create generic marketing materials to promote this kind of label.

By raising awareness about organic food in public catering, the label helps to stimulate demand for organic food and drive the development of supply chains. This helps to create more jobs in organic agriculture, support organic producers to engage in the market, and increase awareness by public procurers.

Steps to be taken

- The kitchen uses the label to communicate that organic food is on the menu, and informs customers/clients about the share of organic produce in the food and drink products provided. The label can be displayed on menus and menu boards.
- The managing authority provides further marketing material (cost-free and for certified facilities only) such as stickers and posters, that can be displayed in areas like kitchens, the canteen, the dining hall, on doors, etc.
- Kitchens with this label can source extra marketing materials such as pins, stickers, banners and similar from a range of places, e.g. a web shop.
- Certified kitchens can design their own posters with the label free of charge by using a digital feature. For example, kitchens could insert their own images together with a text and logo of the label to create a poster unique to them.
- On special occasions (e.g. the 20th anniversary of the label), additional marketing material could be provided by the managing authority, such as posters and banners, free for download from a dedicated website.
- The managing authority could also consider launching digital and outdoor advertising campaigns to help increase public awareness of the label.

More issues to consider

- The training of kitchen staff is an important aspect in the aim to improve skills for cooking organic food, which can in turn lead to the more frequent use of organic products in meals.
- The public institution or kitchen should undertake its own marketing efforts to communicate information about the label, organic food, and the menu.

Training and networking for kitchen professionals

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides a concept for a training and networking program for kitchen professionals in public catering facilities. The aim of this tool is to increase the sustainability of public meals by transforming the kitchen processes and the workflows of the professionals. The goal is the delivery of high-quality, organic, fresh and regional, seasonal, tasty and yet economical public meals.

This tool suggests setting up a long-term consulting, training, and networking programme for the kitchen professionals in public catering facilities. This should help lead to a transformation in meals without creating additional costs for the kitchens. The programme is implemented by an interdisciplinary team of experienced chefs, food policy experts, and communication and education professionals. This program aligns with several EU policies such as the Farm to Fork Strategy, climate protection, and health policies.

Steps to be taken

Establish a program:

- Analyse the needs for and possibilities of establishing such a programme in your municipality. Create a call for tenders and procure a suitable provider to carry out the programme, if an in-house solution is not possible.
- Consult all the relevant local stakeholders, bring interested kitchen professionals together, and find out their ideas, availability, and demands.
- Design the training and all other aspects of the programme, such as networking, communication strategy, and promote the programme among public kitchen professionals.

Programme implementation:

- For each participating kitchen, implement a workshop programme. Carry out an analysis of the “status quo” of the kitchen so that areas of sustainability can be more easily discerned.
- Identify the kitchen’s action fields (*) where transformative activities can have an impact on sustainability. Those activities can cover the meals offered, which foods are purchased, and methods of food preparation, as well as the processes of the kitchen team.
- Discuss and communicate the findings with the management and the kitchen professionals. Transform the existing offer, e.g. by including more seasonal dishes, or adding more vegetables and test the changes in the real kitchen environment.
- After a predefined time, evaluate the progress of the transformation. Adjust the measures, if necessary, and implement further changes. Evaluate the programme outcome in the final workshop.

- Provide further training and seminars. Provide networking opportunities for joint operations, like a regular municipality-wide roundtable on a specific topic.
- Establish a reward or certification scheme to motivate the kitchens and their employees to participate in the programme. Establish a communication strategy to help inform canteens and other professional stakeholders.

(*)Suggested action fields:

Offer

- Design an appealing food offer under the given framework conditions.
- Focus on raw vegetable materials.
- Include attractive seasonal dishes, and nutritionally sound snacks between meals.

Purchasing/ raw materials

- Avoid ready-made and semi-finished products.
- Increase the actual organic share.
- Increase the proportion of regional and seasonal organic foods.
- Apply Innovative procurement policies.

Cooking:

- Encourage intuitive cooking and trained sensorial skills.
- Implement new and creative kitchen practices.
- Use every aspect of the produce available: nose-to-tail and leaf-to-root.
- Minimise food waste.

Team:

- Support learning & empowerment.
- Promote acceptance.
- Encourage team building.
- Promote motivation.

More issues to consider

- The programme can also help commercial services to become more sustainable through its customised approach.
- Note that sourcing a suitable space (one which is large enough, with the requisite kitchen facilities, etc.) may be difficult.
- One of the main recommendations is the implementation of sustainable procurement criteria in the tenders for public catering services and food procurement. This would provide a better framework for the training programme.
- Having an attractive and professional design /corporate identity is important to be taken seriously by the kitchen professionals and to encourage participation.
- This approach is based on the model of the "House of Food" in Copenhagen, adapted to Berlin's conditional framework. As in Copenhagen, the idea is also to change meals and procedures without incurring additional costs, enabling institutions to continue offering meals at a low price.

Climate protection in school kitchens

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides training material for introducing climate protection measures to kitchen professionals, and includes 19 concrete measures concerning food selection, technology, behaviour, and waste management. The aim of this tool is to motivate climate protection measures and to improve education about them in school kitchens. This encompasses the climate impacts of food procurement, cooking and consumption, such as deforestation, use of artificial fertilisers, methane emissions from ruminants, emissions from transports and the cold chain, and waste management policies.

The tool suggests 19 different measures, such as changing menus to encourage plant-based eating, improving kitchen technology and waste management, and training kitchen professionals about improving workflows. To implement these measures, catering businesses and public organisations must make a number of decisions and investments. The tool aligns strongly with EU policies for climate protection, the circular economy, and energy efficiency targets.

Steps to be taken

The main measures suggested in the training materials can be summed up as follows (with measures 1, 3, and 6 being the most important change-makers):

A) Food selection:

Measure 1: Climate-optimised menu plan through the substitution and reduction of meat

Measure 2: Weekly substitution of a meat dish by a vegetable dish

Measure 3: Partially or completely replace milk and dairy products with plant-based alternatives

Measure 4: Partially replace rice with spelt

Measure 5: Use climate-friendly packaging

Measure 6: Drink tap water

Measure 7: Use more organic food

Measure 8: Pay attention to seasonal and regional products

B) Technology:

Measure 9: Use efficient freezers

Measure 10: Use efficient refrigerators

Measure 11: Use cooling instead of freezing

Measure 12: Be able to use convection ovens and cooking appliances efficiently

Measure 13: Upgrade to LED lighting

Measure 14: Use efficient dishwashers

C) Behaviour:

Measure 15: Efficient dishwashing

Measure 16: Switch off freezers and refrigerators during holidays

Measure 17: Care and maintenance of refrigerators and freezers

Measure 18: Switch off stand-by devices

D) Waste:

Measure 19: Waste management

More issues to consider

- The tool uses the results from “KEEKS - Climate and Energy Efficient Kitchens in Schools”, a German project which received a UN Momentum of Change award. In this project, the implementation of all the recommended measures achieved an emission-saving potential of more than 40%.
- This tool presents a wide range of measures which will, however, take time to implement, such as the introduction of new menus and purchasing of equipment.
- The most important aspects of change are measures numbers 1, 3, and 6.
- Decisions at the level of the organisation are required regarding the acquisition of more energy-efficient equipment, in line with decisions regarding cooking or manufacturing methods.
- Ways of working can be changed through the transfer of knowledge and education quickly, easily, and relatively cheaply.

4.5 Gateway Organic Food

Organic agriculture is considered a forerunner to a sustainable food system. Organic farming practices preserve ecological balances, enhance soil fertility and carbon sequestration, and maintain biodiversity, as well as water quality. Organic farming requires a high standard for animal welfare; the use of antibiotics is heavily regulated, and the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) is forbidden. There is even evidence that organic products may have health benefits compared to non-organic products. The European Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy, which is part of the European Green Deal, prioritizes the development of organic farming. The plan is for organic land to account for 25% of EU agricultural land by 2030. To boost the consumer demand for organic food, the EU's Organic Action Plan aims to promote organic canteens and increase the use of green public procurement as well as reinforce organic school food schemes. Some of the tools presented here comprise explorative and supportive measures for the organic market, others target caterers by providing organic labelling and guidance on how to document organic food shares.



Organic produce is in demand for meals in the public sector¹³

List of tools in this gateway

- [Ideas for promoting Organic Cuisine Labels](#)
- [School gardening for sustainable food education](#)
- [Lectures on benefits of organic food](#)
- [Starting to use organic food](#)
- [Developing an organic eco-label for catering](#)
- [Regional organic food in schools](#)

¹³ Photo retrieved from [Healthy, Organic Hospital Foodservice | Vision Software \(vstech.com\)](#)

Ideas for promoting Organic Cuisine Labels

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

Labels or certificates for public catering facilities and restaurants are used to inform consumers that organic food accounts for a certain share of the menu. As the aim of these labels is to raise awareness of customers and stakeholders, there is a need for promotional materials. This tool provides ideas to help the relevant authorities create generic marketing materials to promote this kind of label. By raising awareness about organic food in public catering, the label helps to stimulate demand for organic food and drive the development of supply chains. This helps to create more jobs in organic agriculture, support organic producers to engage in the market, and increase awareness by public procurers.

Steps to be taken

- The kitchen uses the label to communicate that organic food is on the menu, and informs customers/clients about the share of organic produce in the food and drink products provided. The label can be displayed on menus and menu boards.
- The managing authority provides further marketing material (cost-free and for certified facilities only) such as stickers and posters, that can be displayed in areas like kitchens, the canteen, the dining hall, on doors, etc.
- Kitchens with this label can source extra marketing materials such as pins, stickers, banners and similar from a range of places including a web-shop.
- Certified kitchens can design their own posters with the label free of charge by using a digital feature. For example, kitchens could insert their own images together with a text and logo of the label to create a poster unique to them.
- On special occasions (e.g., the 20th anniversary of the label), additional marketing material could be provided by the managing authority, such as posters and banners, free for download from a dedicated website.
- The managing authority could also consider launching digital and outdoor advertising campaigns to help increase public awareness of the label.

More issues to consider

- The training of kitchen staff is an important aspect in the aim to improve skills for cooking organic food, which can in turn lead to the more frequent use of organic products in meals.
- The public institution or kitchen should undertake its own marketing efforts to communicate information about the label, organic food, and the menu.

School gardening for sustainable food education

Origin of the tool: Russia

Intended users: Caterers, teachers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides a framework for setting up a school garden and it into the curriculum, providing a highly practical approach to sustainable food education. This tool recommends implementing school gardening as an approach for sustainable food education. The tool helps highlight the connections between growing and consuming food. It raises awareness about the importance of plant-based food for young people. It also lists potential plants and practical growing methods for school premises. The tool requires collaboration between teachers, school administrations, and technical personnel. School gardening is a multidisciplinary educational approach in line with European health, biodiversity, climate and food security policies.

Steps to be taken

- Introduce school gardening into the curriculum with teachers who are interested and involved in sustainability education, particularly those with a focus on food.
- Teaching about plant-based food systems helps build up a conceptual basis for sustainable food production and consumption through school gardening.
- Plan the gardening, outlining plants, growing sites, and methods to be used inside the premises. (Growing outside the premises is also possible, but wintertime maintenance must be taken into account).
- Obtaining supplies such as containers and seeds for growing plants on the premises may require school funding.
- Young people can choose what kind of crops/ seeds/ greens they would like to grow. Suitable plants include; sunflower and mustard from oilseed crops, green and black mung beans, chickpeas, beans, soya beans, lentils, peas, peas and lucerne, onion, garlic, celery, broccoli, watercress salad, red cabbage, dill, parsley, cilantro (coriander), and sorrel.
- It may be more interesting to use a range of different growing methods, such as hydroponics, jute mats (or similar) for microgreens, simple box hydroponics for green sprouts, as well as soil seedlings for green and vegetable crops.
- Tasking young people with recording and reporting about their plant growing is a pragmatic exercise which can help increase their enthusiasm for learning about sustainable food systems.

More issues to consider

- School gardening offers a unique way to combine conceptual and pragmatic education.
- It invites and enables strong collaboration between teachers and other school personnel.
- It may also create more work for personnel and incur costs.
- To make it easier, school gardening can be started with a modest number of plants and simple growing methods, and expanded later with the accumulation of experience.

Lectures on benefits of organic food

Origin of the tool: Poland

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

To promote the benefits and improve the appreciation of organic food among the different stakeholder groups in public institutions (e.g. procurers, kitchen professionals, consumers, parents, etc.), lectures by scientists or other experts can be organised by the public administration. Deepening the appreciation of organic produce has a positive impact on the demand for organic products and is thereby linked to the economic, environmental and social benefits of a growing organic market. The increase of organic production is one of the aims of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy, EU 2030 Biodiversity strategy and other environmental policies.

Steps to be taken

- Define the objectives, the learning aims, the target groups, and the number of participants for the lecture. Note that the presentation needs to be easy to understand and interesting for all stakeholder groups, so there will be slightly different approaches depending on the makeup of the audience.
- Select relevant topics for the target groups (e.g. for caterers, kitchen personnel, consumers), develop a meeting agenda, and select a suitable date - all in consultation with the presenter. Select an appropriate scientist or expert to give a presentation.
- Book a suitable room including technical equipment (e.g. computer, projector, sound system, internet access) for the event. Organise (organic) snacks and refreshments for the meeting, if the budget allows for it. Organise a post-meeting communal tasting of organic products by approaching different organic producers.
- Send out invitations to selected representatives of the target groups, including the agenda, directions and the request for registration, at least four weeks in advance. Prepare printed handouts of the presentation and/or further informational material. On the day of the meeting, check the technical equipment in advance. Ensure a friendly atmosphere in the meeting by letting the participants get to know each other.
- Encourage participants to discuss during the meeting; highlight that they now have a chance to have their questions answered by a reliable source. Follow up with an email thanking them for their participation, advice on where to get further information, and how to get in touch.

More issues to consider

- Decision makers are responsible for executing this tool to help the organization introduce organic food into public meals. It is important to clearly communicate:
 - The benefits of organic food (e.g. nutritional and environmental values);
 - The importance of public procurement and catering with regard to changing the food system;
 - Easy ways of initiating change for practitioners: e.g., give examples of where organic food can be bought (such as local farmers markets, organic stores, box schemes, etc.), or ways to change procurement routines, like the EU's green public procurement criteria (GPP), etc.

- It is important not only to focus on persuading the participating professionals in the meeting to use organic produce, but also the participating consumers, like parents of pupils or residents of social care homes.
- Cooperation with scientific institutions or scientists dealing with education in the area of organic food quality is relevant because their expertise is reliable and based on scientific evidence.

Starting to use organic food

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

The use of organic food may be minimal or even non-existent in public catering facilities. This tool helps public procurers and catering service providers to start procuring organic food. The experiences of several Finnish public procurers and catering managers across the country between 2010-2020 provide the background for this tool.

The tool provides advice on organic procurement, certification, promotion schemes, and the selection of organic products. Organic production follows principles of environmental sustainability and animal welfare, and organic food is produced without pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, hormones (antibiotics), and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It therefore encourages biodiversity and human health. Public procurement can stimulate market demand for organic food and help support an emerging organic sector. Organic food is supported by the EU through strategies and policies for biodiversity, zero pollution, and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Steps to be taken

- The decision to buy environmentally friendly products or products that are produced without harmful or hazardous substances is a good starting point for procuring organic products.
- Organic certification ensures that products come from organic producers which are regulated by the EU. This certification covers the whole supply chain; producers, processors, wholesalers, and retailers. For restaurants and public meal providers, some countries require certification, while others deem it adequate that the providers be certified or enter an organic promotion scheme. Voluntary organic promotion schemes (e.g. labelling schemes) increase the visibility of organic food use and help raise consumer awareness.
- Contact the relevant authorities and certification bodies so that you are sure on how to comply with regulations on buying and/or providing organic food. Compliance may require the organic certification of public kitchens or providers of catering services, and regulations on documentation for the procurement of organic and conventional food.
- The selection of organic products is often more limited than conventional products. Start with basic organic products such as cereals, pulses, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, eggs, and milk.

- Small packaging sizes may cause a problem when large quantities of produce are needed. While small kitchens can deal with small packages (e.g. vegetables, meat in 200 g units), large kitchens cannot use these (getting 40 kg of ingredient into the ‘industrial’ kettle means opening 200 unit packages); for large kitchens ‘organic introduction’ may mean ingredients sold and used in small quantities only, such as tea, coffee and cacao. This may also support Fair Trade products.
- Identify suppliers who are certified organic, as well as wholesalers. This will allow direct negotiations regarding the processing of organic ingredients, delivery volumes, packaging sizes, and materials. Try to negotiate about the packaging sizes if possible.
- Organic products are often more expensive than conventional products. Sometimes, however, it is the other way round due to market fluctuations; price levels, bargain prices, and sales need to be considered when sourcing organic produce. By replacing more costly items with cheaper ones (basic food items), you are more likely to remain within the food procurement budget.
- Encourage kitchen staff to cook with basic organic products. This may require new menus, new kitchen routines and increasing the use of seasonal produce. Provide relevant training to kitchen professionals and procurers.

More issues to be considered

- Try to participate in organic promotion schemes as they are important for awareness-raising about the use and benefits of organic food. This may lead to an increased demand for organic food. Support the change towards increased use of organic products by communicating the benefits of the production methods; environmental friendliness, and improved human health and animal welfare.
- Allow for flexibility in the procurement of organic food, particularly in emerging markets where supplies may fluctuate. Remain a regular buyer of organic food and help maintain regular demand to encourage organic suppliers.



Workshop on introduction of organic pulses and vegetables, Municipality of Aarhus¹⁴

¹⁴ Photo credits: Municipality of Aarhus

Developing an organic eco-label for catering

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool gives advice on how a national or local eco-label can be established for catering facilities to label their meals containing organic ingredients. Such a label closes a gap, because although EU and national organic labels may only be used for products where at least 95% of the agricultural ingredients are organic, the EU does *not* regulate the variable use of organic food in catering facilities. To support organic food use in the catering sector, caterers need the ability to display it with appropriate labels, even if their meals contain less than 95% organic ingredients. Developing national or local eco-labels for caterers aligns with the EU's Farm to Fork, biodiversity, and clean environment policies.

Steps to be taken

- The first step in developing an organic eco-label for caterers requires establishing levels for the share of organic ingredients in the menu. For example, level 1 = between 20 and 50% of raw materials are organic; level 2 = between 50 and 80% of raw materials are organic; and level 3 = between 80 and 100% of raw materials are organic. Create logos for these levels that can be used in communications.
- Decide whether to establish a fee for use of the label. Note that allowing the label to be used for free encourages more widespread use of it, which in turn would make procuring school catering and verifying the conformity of catering contracts easier.
- Decide how the caterer will calculate the percentage of its organic products, e.g. according to quantity or cost. Decide when and how the share of organic ingredients are to be checked, e.g. once a month.

More issues to consider

A national or local catering eco-label simplifies the supervision of organic food provision for contracting authorities, because another body verifies compliance with the label. This body could be a state supervisory body, which would then check the compliance of the catering service with the eco-label requirements.

Regional organic food in schools

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Caterers, customers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool helps to make regional organic agriculture more visible for young people, and offers strategies to get more regional organic food onto their plates. The aims of this tool are to make regional organic agriculture visible for young people and to introduce more regional organic food into menus. This is achieved by depicting the different food chains from production to consumption through videos, excursions or similar, and by serving seasonal dishes cooked from these food items. This work requires collaboration between producers, public procurement, and catering services, as well as teachers, and can be set up as a project or on a continuous basis. The tool strengthens regional value chains and promotes several EU policies related to food, such as climate protection, biodiversity, and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Steps to be taken

Preparation:

- Set up an initiative or programme and develop a concept which gives guidance on how to get more regional organic food into school kitchens and information about it into school curricula.
- Collaborate closely with the different relevant stakeholder groups (school caterers, teachers, farmers, procurers, etc.) to set up the programme. Define rules for participation, e.g. suggest that only catering companies interested in integrating at least 5 regional organic products per month in their school menus can participate.
- Send out invitations to all schools, catering services, and regional organic farmers to participate and promote the programme.

Building the food supply chain:

- Facilitate the communication process between menu planners, retailers, and producers; support the development of menu plans, and collect ideas for lessons.
- Create a logo for the regional organic daily meal which can be used on school menus. Create an online map of all participating producers, processors, caterers, and schools, and visualize the supply chains.
- Advance joint cultivation plans between catering companies and producers.

Knowledge development:

- Develop, provide, and evaluate the teaching materials for schools, including: educational modules for different food items, like the supply chain of dairy products or of apples; short films and radio plays, e.g., on the product of the month (potatoes, butter, strawberries); hands-on opportunities for pupils, like excursions to farmers or processors, tastings, schemes to grow their own vegetables, (online) games, etc.
- Provide formats for home schooling. Create a permanent range of information for pupils, teachers and parents.

More issues to consider

- The early steps in this educational approach may call for plenty of effort and time, as new connections do not necessarily build up easily or quickly.
- An increased communication with the farmers is important for a well-functioning collaboration.
- The provision of sufficient organic vegetables has proved to be a challenge where this tool has been implemented, and the transition from using conventional to organic farms takes time.
- Intermediary trade can make the organic products more expensive, which could necessitate financial support from the government.
- The inclusion of organic food as procurement criteria when the catering service is commissioned is recommended.
- Public relations and presence at political or education events is important to raise awareness and increase participation.
- This tool can be used to help change the regional food system.



Children in Finnish school enjoying organic berries¹⁵

¹⁵ Photo credit: Samuel Hoisko, Finnish Professional Catering Association

4.6 Gateway Healthy and Plant-based diets

Nutrition experts link high intake of meat and saturated fats with increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, obesity and other health conditions. Today, the consumption of food from plants is below current nutritional recommendations in the EU. Working with menu changes, cooking skills, procurement and awareness raising for a variety of plant-based and balanced diets, public meals are at the forefront of the change towards a more sustainable food system. Successful menu changes and the introduction of new plant-based food items depend on the knowledge and skills of the kitchen professionals, as well as on good communication and understanding of the end-users' perceptions of plant-based food. Therefore, most of the tools in this gateway present training concepts for chefs and service personnel, as well as educational and hands-on approaches for the customers. Public procurers can use the EU's Green Public Procurement criteria to include requirements for healthy vegetarian meals. The tools can be used at various levels of public procurement and catering service organizations as inspiration, as well as for contextually adapted implementation.



Plant-based meals are gaining popularity¹⁶

List of tools in this gateway

- [Organizing training for plant-based cooking](#)
- [Appealing plant-based meals for senior citizens](#)
- [Sensory food education for children](#)
- [Plant-forward eating](#)
- [Attractive serving of plant-based food](#)
- [Motivating changes for cooking plant-based menus](#)

¹⁶ Photo credit: Tomi Setälä, Finnish Professional Catering Association

Organizing training for plant-based cooking

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Public administration, caterers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides good practice guidelines for organising the upskilling of kitchen professionals on plant-based meals in municipal kitchens, using the example of introducing organic lentils in the menu. The tool is relevant for educators, municipalities, and catering companies. Cooking and serving more plant-based meals can be part of a strategy for more sustainable meals in public institutions. It helps to address several Sustainable Development Goals, e.g. quality education, good health and wellbeing, and climate action.

Steps to be taken

- Identify and contact trainers who have the necessary competences and interest in training professionals from public kitchens.
- Clarify aspects such as; expected qualifications after training, duration of training, topics to be covered, methods, and costs. Shorter training days are recommended.
- Training topics could include:
 - Practical skills for cooking meals with lentils and other plant-based proteins.
 - Calculating costs of meals cooked with organic lentils.
 - Finding suppliers for organic lentils.
 - Creating and naming plant-based recipes.
- Make all aspects of the training as real and authentic as possible, emphasizing practical exercises; remember to leave room for experienced professionals to be creative.
- Involve public procurers and suppliers to be part of the training. This is particularly recommended if the menus are to include new items and recipes. Motivate networking and the exchange of tips and training experiences among the participants.
- Organise an evaluation of the training course with all stakeholders, including the responsible person in the municipality and the trainer. Provide a short questionnaire to collect the feedback of the kitchen staff.

More issues to consider

- Make sure the municipality supports the need for training and that there is a budget available for this scheme. Keep in mind that labour market and/or trade union rules, particularly around issues such as payment and working hours, may apply to the training.
- Ensure that the public kitchens remain functioning on the days where the permanent professionals are attending the training. If that is not possible, catering should be provided from external suppliers.
- Try to include all relevant municipal kitchens in the training, as this facilitates the implementation of a municipal-level strategy of increasing the number of servings of plant-based meals.

Appealing plant-based meals for senior citizens

Origin of the tool: Poland Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool shows how to introduce healthy, plant-based meals in social care homes in ways that will be appreciated by the residents. It relies on integrating the senior citizens as well as the kitchen professionals into the change. The aim of this tool is to show how healthy, plant-based meals can be introduced in social care homes in ways that will be embraced by their residents. The transformation of meals for senior citizens has to be gradual, and all stakeholders should be involved; while kitchen professionals learn how to prepare “greener” (plant-based) meals and how to present them to senior citizens in an effective way, the senior citizens themselves can learn about health and environmental reasons for the changes, taste every new item on the menu, and give their feedback. When welcomed by social care home residents, plant-based meals can be a cost-effective way to improve health and lower the environmental impact of public catering, in alignment with EU policies for health and environment.

Steps to be taken

- Provide training for kitchen professionals in the techniques of introducing plant-based meals to the everyday menu of senior citizens, led or supported by dietitians. Include information about the health, economic and environmental benefits of these changes: e.g., reducing meat and using lentils can be cost efficient, tasty, and a healthy alternative to traditional heavy dishes; organic and seasonal fruits can become effortless and flavourful dessert; breakfast can become a healthy and colourful meal with legume paste, yoghurt parfait or egg salad; favourite sweets can be modified into a source of protein (bean cookies).
- Conduct a survey among the residents about their meal preferences, including questions on plant-based meals. The results will provide a first insight into the possibilities and challenges of the transformation. Prepare a questionnaire to gather feedback on the tastings.
- Arrange regular tasting sessions for new meals such as legume burgers, oven-baked veggies, meals based on diverse groats, spinach cake, and bean cookies for seniors and gather feedback in a short questionnaire, then analyse the results. Gradually, but enthusiastically, introduce the new plant-based dishes based on the preferences of the residents.
- In parallel, organise presentations about sustainable food and the health aspects of plant-based food for the residents.

More issues to consider

- By letting the residents participate in the process, they feel more involved in the new menu composition, more aware of the reasons behind it, and therefore more tolerant and open to changes. Professionals who cook and serve food are crucial actors in this process, and it is very important that they believe in this action for change and are able to pass on their enthusiasm for the new dishes to the residents.

- It is practical to start introducing plant-based products gradually (e.g., start preparing meatballs with part meat and part legumes). It is effective to take traditional dishes and transform them into plant-based meals.
- Cooking with seasonal produce is usually preferable. Analyzing food preferences provides a good basis for introducing other dietary changes, like introducing more organic products.

Sensory food education for children

Origin of the tool: Finland Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool suggests how young children can learn about and enjoy different types of vegetables, fruits, berries, and dishes containing them in positive and creative ways. The learning approach emphasises sensory food education and is based on the French SAPERE method. Catering and nursing personnel in day care institutions work in collaboration to procure vegetables, fruits, and berries, which are then used in sensory learning experiences for children. Learning to consume and enjoy foods from the plant kingdom from an early age holds promise for better public health and mitigated environmental impacts, both of which are important EU strategy and policy goals.

Steps to be taken

- Children become acquainted with a variety of fresh, healthy foods through sensory experiences based on vision, touch, smell, taste, and texture in the mouth.
- Creating thematic occasions, such as harvest days and plant exhibitions, enables children to learn about plants, and identify and taste vegetables, fruits and berries through play. Introducing vegetable dishes into diets makes plant-based food familiar and easier to accept and enjoy.
- Examples of sensory activities include ‘touching bags’, in which bags of vegetables are identified through touch; ‘scent boxes’, in which different vegetables, concealed in a bag, are identified by smell; and ‘taste plates’, which offer a selection of vegetables to be tasted and named.
- The plant-theme can be covered in lessons from different perspectives (writing, visual activities, discussion, crafting, singing, shaping, drawing, etc.). Activities like these can be modified based on respective cultures and their important edible plants and vegetarian dishes.

More issues to be considered

- Allergies to vegetables such as carrots, strawberries, celery, and others need to be considered when preparing the activities. Some vegetables, fruit, and berries such as beetroots, potatoes, bell peppers, bananas, and blueberries may stain clothes.



School garden in School no. 126, St. Petersburg¹⁷

Plant-forward eating

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool supports plant-forward eating by encouraging caterers to include different plant-based diets in their menu plans, from flexitarian to vegan. This helps expose customers to the different recipes and meal possibilities that a more plant-based diet offers. It encourages public procurement and catering service personnel to integrate these kinds of meals into their menu plans through the lens of nutritional recommendations. Plant-forward eating aligns with public health and environmental strategies and policies of the EU.

Steps to be taken

- Meal providers can encourage plant-forward diets by offering different dishes with an increased emphasis on food from plants. Note that flexitarian diets include a range of different produce, and may entail mixed diet meals (with elements of fish, meat, dairy, etc.), meals with little meat and dairy content, vegetarian meals, or vegan meals (meals free of meat and dairy).
- A vegetarian diet may include milk and egg products (lacto-ovo-vegetarian), fish (pescatarian), or poultry (pollotarian). A vegan diet only includes foods from plants such as grains, legumes (peas, beans and lentils), vegetables, fruits, berries, nuts, almonds, seeds, and oils, as well as mushrooms.
- Public meal providers can start to offer customers options for plant-forward eating, which increases the weight and volume of food items of plant origin while allowing for different degrees of items of animal origin. Gradual changes can be introduced to the menu, such as the addition of one or two vegetarian and/or vegan meals per week.
- Recipes need to be tested to ensure that suppliers have the correct equipment and are using the right production processes. It is important to follow nutritional

¹⁷ Photo credit: School no. 126, St. Petersburg

recommendations for various diets, as vegan diets in particular require complementary amino acids in plant proteins, fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals.

- The menus can be further developed based on the feedback received.

More issues to be considered

- Food items of plant origin include (whole) grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, berries, oils, nuts, almonds, and seeds, as well as mushrooms. Food items of animal origin include beef, goat, mutton, pork, poultry, and fish, as well as eggs and milk products.
- A balanced diet should provide the necessary nutrients for optimal health over a longer period of time. A vegan diet can offer balanced nutrition if it is planned in terms of complementary nutrients and vitamin supplements. A vegetarian diet that includes some animal-based products offers more easily balanced nutrition.
- Plant-forward eating should be promoted through the delivery of tasty, creative meals. It may take some time for customers to embrace their new plant-forward menus; adding frequent new dishes with a gradual increase in plant-based foods may help. Communicating with customers is important for ensuring good relations and an easier transition towards plant-forward eating.



Increased shares of plant-based meals¹⁸

¹⁸ Captured from StratKIT Online Toolkit Video <https://youtu.be/49kEpZF7v7k>

Attractive serving of plant-based food

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool focuses on serving techniques as a way to increase the consumption of plant-based food by suggesting good practices for serving the food at the lunch buffet. Such practices may help encourage customers to choose vegetarian meals, which in turn increases the consumption of plant-based food. The tool is targeted at kitchen professionals and other stakeholders who work with meal preparation and serving. The intake of more plant-based food supports a healthy and climate-friendly diet in alignment with EU strategies and policies.

Steps to be taken

- Plant-based dishes are served in various ways as both main and side dishes, and in salads, toppings, breads, and spreads, so consider providing a range of hot and cold dishes. Plant-based foods (like salads, vegetarian or vegan dishes and toppings, as well as vegetable supplements) are placed at the beginning of the serving line. Using attractive containers, bowls and tableware makes the serving more enjoyable.
- Warm vegetable supplements should be placed before the energy supplement (e.g., pasta, potatoes, couscous, barley, rice, etc.). Hot plant-based dishes should be set before dishes containing meat.
- Plant-based dishes should be named in an appealing way. Plant-based items can also be used as dairy alternatives and in desserts.
- To introduce pupils and other diners to the new menu, a list of the plants included in daily meals should be supplied, along with chopped samples if possible. Vegetables should also be served in the school's breakfast and snack menu.



Clean and friendly serving of salads in Finland¹⁹

¹⁹ Photo by Antti Kallio, Finnish Professional Catering Association, 2021

Motivating changes for cooking plant-based menus

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Caterers

Tool in a nutshell

When public authorities develop new strategies towards a more sustainable food system, kitchen professionals have to implement the new measures. This tool suggests ways in which kitchen professionals can be motivated to change their menus, for example in connection with new food strategies. The tool uses the example aim of increasing the use of pulses in public meals to meet new nutritional recommendations, such as the delivery of 100g of pulses per day per customer. The tool is designed to be used by managers and decision makers who are involved in the provision of public meals and strategic changes related to food and sustainability. By changing menus to include more pulses, public meals contribute to reducing the impact on climate, as smaller, fewer portions of meat are necessary to create a more sustainable, nutritious meal.

Steps to be taken

- Inform kitchen professionals, using this example, about the new nutritional guidelines via email, leaflets, brochures, cookbooks, etc.
- Contract a competent intermediary with knowledge of public meals and public kitchen routines to produce inspirational material for the kitchen professionals, such as a video.
- Organise a meeting to raise awareness at the municipal level, or, if necessary, several meetings, e.g. one for each municipal kitchen.
- Show the inspirational video or provide presentations, explaining the necessity of the change and the benefits; explain the important role of the kitchen professionals.
- Plan for a questions-and-answers session and encourage discussion among the kitchen professionals and managers in catering services and the municipality.
- Plan to discuss recipes, ingredients, menus, and cooking routines. This procedure allows the kitchen professionals to reflect on their own routines and practices, and about the possibilities for meeting the requirements for change.
- Distribute samples (of the new ingredients or food item) and recipes to the kitchen professionals at the meeting.
- Organise a recurring event or procedure to continuously motivate kitchen professionals to use the inspirational materials, for example sharing a recipe of the month or a newsletter swapping insights among the municipal kitchens.

More issues to consider

The tool was derived from municipality-level but the principles of the tool are not limited to municipalities only.

4.7 Gateway Food Waste

Food loss and food waste are serious challenges for the current global food system, revealing asymmetries, paradoxes and inequalities. In 2011, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimated that 1/3 of the world's food was lost or wasted every year. In the EU, the FUSION project estimated that food waste accounts for 88 million tons annually, with a value of roughly 143 billion euros. Food waste is not just an economic or ethical issue; it also impacts the environment. According to the UNEP Food Waste Index 2021, it generates 8-10 % of global greenhouse gas emissions, thus contributing to climate change. For this reason, the United Nations included "halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer level and reducing food losses along production and supply chains by 2030" under its Sustainable Development Goal 12.3.

Food waste is a challenging topic for public procurement and the catering sector, especially in countries that have not yet established a proper food waste policy or have access to tools for measuring progress in food waste prevention. The tools in this Gateway include the development of a food waste strategy and different ways to measure food waste. Moreover, several of the tools provide practical advice for kitchen professionals and other stakeholders on how to raise awareness on food waste and most importantly, how to prevent food waste.



Food waste prevention demands increased attention²⁰

List of tools in this gateway

- [Strategy for reducing food waste](#)
- [Measuring food waste in school canteens](#)
- [Food waste management during serving](#)
- [Food waste management](#)
- [School catering tackling food waste](#)
- [Teachers tackling food waste](#)
- [Three ways to measure food waste](#)
- [Variable portion sizes](#)

²⁰ Photo credit: [How much food waste does the hospitality sector create? \(morningadvertiser.co.uk\)](https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk)

Strategy for reducing food waste

Origin of the tool: Poland

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

Reducing food waste in public institutions is especially difficult for regions without an existing policy on this issue. Developing a strategy and an action plan with a multidisciplinary team can kickstart the change. This tool aims at reducing food waste in public institutions and is especially suitable for regions without an existing policy to tackle food waste. This strategy introduces a multidisciplinary team consisting of the local authority, scientists, experts, and practitioners from the public catering facilities that studies the situation, develops a strategy, measures food waste, and prepares an action plan to gradually (but effectively) reduce food waste. Tackling food waste aligns with EU policies for climate protection, circular economy and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Steps to be taken

- Decide to formulate and implement a strategy to reduce food waste in public institutions in your municipality. The development of the strategy is supported by a multidisciplinary team. Partner up with relevant scientific institutions to ensure access to expertise and support for organizing a multidisciplinary team of scientists, experts, kitchen professionals, and other practitioners.
- Facilitate meetings with all involved stakeholders (decision makers, researchers, management, canteen personnel, and residents) to collect as much relevant information as possible. Try to get answers to questions like: What are the onsite observations of the amount and type of food waste? Have there been any approaches to tackle food waste before? What are suitable best practice examples to tackle food waste and what strategies do other regions apply? What are the challenges to consider? What future developments are there to consider?
- Formulate a strategy based on what you learned so far. The strategy may include topics such as:
 - Goals
 - Necessary steps and working groups: e.g. Measuring and Analysis, Action Plan, Education, Communication
 - Timetable
 - Budget
 - Communication plan
- Implement the strategy with the help of the multidisciplinary team: Regularly measure the food waste in participating public facilities to find out the volume of waste, the phases of the process in which it is created, and what it mainly consists of.
- Analyse these measurements and identify the main fields of action. Develop an action plan for food waste prevention with concrete measures, timing, responsibilities, and budget. Offer educational workshops for different stakeholder groups (kitchen professionals, pupils, senior citizens, etc.) Provide the results of the studies in reports and implement further communication measures.

More issues to consider

- Involving and collaborating with the local decision makers that are financing the public institution is crucial in creating efficient communication channels between stakeholders and to keep them motivated. Involving local stakeholders facilitates the work of the multidisciplinary team. Transparent communication is necessary for working as a multidisciplinary team.

Measuring food waste in school canteens

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool helps school caterers to monitor the generation of food waste in school kitchens and dining halls and to record developments in its reduction.

Steps to be taken

- Measure the amount of food waste generated during one school week (5 days) and repeat this every year.
- Sorting helps to identify the main causes of food waste. Sort the food waste into four buckets/containers:
 - Inedible food waste (peels, bones, skin and other inedible parts)
 - Spoiled food (food that is either failed by cooking or with expired shelf-time)
 - Food surplus (food that is cooked but not served)
 - Plate leftovers (food that is served but not eaten by customers)
- Weigh the buckets/containers at the end of each day. If possible, weigh the amount of food prepared for each day as well, or calculate the amount of food based on an agreed portion size and number of portions.
- Keep a record of the number of portions served each day. Record the amount of food waste on a daily basis, then calculate the average (based on the 5-day results). Calculate the generation of food waste per portion and type. Analyse the records and create reports to support further developments in food waste reduction.

More issues to consider

- Once the amount of food waste is measured, action must be taken to reduce it. Find out more in “Tackling food waste: the role of caterers” and “Tackling food waste: the role of teachers and school managers”. Regular monitoring and measuring of food waste (according to amount, types and sources) also help children better understand the causes and impacts of food waste.



No left overs – no food waste²¹

Food waste management during serving

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Caterers, customers, others

Tool in a nutshell

An important part of food waste – the plate waste – is generated during the serving and consumption of food. This tool helps with prevention of this food waste with customers. This kind of food waste is often an important part of an institution's total food waste and one in which the customers can participate in its prevention. This tool offers advice to both catering personnel about methods to prevent food waste, and customers about changing their sustainable meal consumption habits. The tool aligns with EU Farm to Fork, climate change, and circular economy strategies.

Steps to be taken

- Communicate the food service's sustainability goals to customers and make clear that the prevention of food waste is part of the effort.
- Monitoring customers' food consumption helps to align food serving more closely with demand. This helps leftover food stay in a serviceable condition, which increases its chances of being cooled and served later.
- To encourage the balanced consumption of different parts of the meal by customers, nutritional recommendations may help. A visual plate model shows how to compile a balanced, nutritious meal from a main course, side dishes, salads, bread, spread, and drink. This helps to prevent some parts of the meal becoming leftover or plate waste.
- As plant-based food may generate more food waste, placing it to the forefront on the serving line helps to increase its consumption.
- Educating customers about eating the plate clean is also recommended. Customers need to be encouraged to eat what they take and take what they eat.

²¹ Photo: SEI Tallinn, 2021

- Weigh or visually estimate the amount of food waste and inform customers about successes in combating food waste, based on factual records.

More issues to be considered

- Direct conversations between personnel and customers are recommended.
- Customer information about food waste, and its decrease, can be delivered in imaginative ways, such as colorful progress charts.
- Customers typically like to see bowls full of food, so it's important to explain why they are emptier than usual (i.e. the prevention of food waste).
- Responsible and constructive customer feedback via social media is recommended.
- Food service personnel benefit when they know the number of customers expected beforehand. This allows them to prepare correct amounts of food, which is particularly important regarding special diet meals, which should not be prepared unnecessarily for no-show customers.



No extra food – no food waste²²

²² Photo credit: W. Troszka, Municipality of Rybnik

Food waste management

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool helps to avoid food waste in catering services by taking an overall view of the public meal provision process, learning about the reasons for waste, and then eliminating them. Cuts to waste generation can be made at many points of the process, and can be achieved collaboratively, as large organisations typically employ different people to procure food, cook and prepare meals, and serve it to customers. The benefits of preventing food waste include cost and labour savings, as well as the decrease of environmental impacts along the whole food chain. Food waste reduction helps in the action against climate change in particular by decreasing greenhouse gases produced from decomposing biomass; an important component of EU climate policies.

Steps to be taken

- The potential for food waste ranges across the procurement, storage, manufacturing, and serving phases, and it is largely affected by menu planning and customer numbers.
- It is important to estimate the number of customers as accurately as possible, based on previous estimates or sources of reliable information. Taking customer preferences into account during menu planning helps to reduce waste.
- Procured food items may change and smaller volumes may bring savings. Food stores are monitored for expiry dates to avoid food waste. Standardised recipes, weighed ingredients, and customised cooking/ manufacturing methods are used to ensure meal quality, helping to mitigate waste issues.
- Food consumption at the customer interface is monitored and only sufficient volumes are brought to the serving line. If meals are portioned for customers, the appropriate volumes are served according to nutritional recommendations and individual requests (preferably by pictorial guides).
- If possible, food not yet brought to serving (i.e. extra helpings) can be kept aside or moved to cold storage in the kitchen in due time; the hygienic quality is preserved. If there is still left-over food at the end of the meal, a sale or donation can be organised.
- To see how the prevention measures are working, food waste needs to be measured, followed-up, and reported on periodically according to plan.

More issues to be considered

- Customers may need some time to get acquainted with new menus (e.g. ones that offer more plant-based meals), which will have an impact on the amount of time it will take to reduce food waste.
- Communicating to customers the importance of the responsible consumption of food, both in self-service and portioning service canteens, and about progress in waste prevention is important.
- Food waste measurement and results can be used as part of this communication effort.

School catering tackling food waste

Origin of the tool: Estonia

Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool consists of various measures which help catering providers and the people working in kitchens and dining halls to take action in tackling food waste. Reducing food waste is not only beneficial for the environment, but can also have economic benefits for the catering provider.

Steps to be taken

- Measure food waste generation regularly and identify the causes of food waste Adjust the menu or recipes according to the leftover food.
- Order the right amount of food products and use the First-In-First-Out system for food storage; place items with the soonest best-before or use-by dates at the front of the storage space, and put food items with the furthest dates at the back.
- Store food under proper conditions (e.g. frozen, chilled, etc.).
- Prepare and serve the right amount of food; use self-serving or offer smaller portions with the option to add. Use leftover food items during another meal service in compliance with food safety requirements.
- Redistribute surplus food; e.g. in cooperation with a food bank.
- Collect biowaste in a separate container.

More issues to consider

To achieve the best results in reducing the food waste, an integrated approach must be taken:

- The whole school, i.e. children, teachers, and school management, should be involved. Campaigns, competitions and other hands-on activities can be organized. Food waste issues should be considered when tendering for the catering service.



Food waste from school in Tallinn²³

²³ Photo: SEI Tallinn, 2021

Teachers tackling food waste

Origin of the tool: Estonia Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, teachers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool helps teachers and school managers involve children in implementing food waste reduction solutions, influencing eating habits and instilling attitudes of respect toward food.

Steps to be taken

Teachers:

- Explain to students that they can be part of the solution to the food waste problem through changing their eating habits in schools and at home. Remind students not to take more than they can eat. Lead by example: don't waste your own food!
- Integrate food into your teaching subject: biology, geography, math, social studies, cooking classes, gardening, etc. Organise hands-on activities to introduce the school kitchen staff and their work, e.g. cooking together.
- Invite guest speakers (e.g., chefs or food bank organisers) to talk about food. Suggest food waste-related topics for research projects and other assignments. Explain the meaning and difference between "use by" and "best before" dates.
- Collect opinions from students to give the kitchen and caterers feedback on how to make school food better and improve the dining experience.

School managers:

- Form an action group with the participation of all stakeholders and set goals for food waste reduction. Involve students to find out what makes food attractive and tasteful.
- Create a system for pre-ordering food and reporting how many students are present.
- Plan lunch breaks at the appropriate time and length.
- Initiate campaigns, competitions, and other hands-on activities to raise awareness at the whole-school level
- Include food waste into the procurement criteria of catering services

More issues to consider

- To have a bigger effect on reducing food waste, the schools must take an integrated approach, i.e., collaborate with school caterers and cooks

Three ways to measure food waste

Origin of the tool: Denmark Intended users: Policy makers, public administration

Tool in a nutshell

The prevention of food waste is important for increasing the sustainability of public meals from an ethical, economic, and environmental perspective. Food waste prevention is one of the aims of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy. This tool provides three approaches to measuring food waste. The tool is useful for public administrations, catering services, and kitchen professionals. This tool provides necessary steps and highlights the advantages and disadvantages of the three approaches.

Steps to be taken

- Appoint a central coordinator in the municipality's administration who will be responsible for organising and monitoring the progress in preventing food waste.
- Investigate a range of methods for measuring food waste in public kitchens and assess the benefits and challenges of each method. Here are three example methods:
 - Method A: The kitchen staff sorts and measures food waste.
 - Method B: An external partner sorts and measures food waste in some (randomly selected) public kitchens.
 - Method C: The kitchen staff sorts the waste into food waste and other waste. The waste disposal enterprise weighs the food waste.
- Decide on a method. Take into account the nature of public kitchens, the scale, and the resources available for implementing the initiative. Decide which and how many kitchens will be involved in the food waste measurement scheme.
- Depending on the method you pick, set aside resources (hours and budget) in both the public authority and the kitchens. Keep in mind that measuring food waste will pose an extra workload for the kitchen staff. Consider setting a starting date and ending date for the food waste measuring scheme.
- Decide on a timeline which outlines how frequently (once a week or daily) food waste measurements will be carried out.
- Especially if you pick method A, be sure to create informational material targeted at the kitchen staff, including instructions for kitchen leaders on how to motivate co-workers to engage in the action. Explain why food waste measurement is being implemented by explaining the beneficial effects on finances, resource use, and the environment.
- Instruct and provide support to kitchen staff to help them overcome difficulties with the sorting and measuring. Collect the food waste measurement data and share progress updates with the kitchens.

More issues to consider

If you pick Method A (the kitchen staff sort and measure food waste), please consider the following:

- Advantages: the direct involvement of staff means that the individual employee feels more ownership and understands which routines and practices can be changed to reduce food waste. Find out whether digital measuring tools would be available to

facilitate the measuring procedures. Method A is particularly suitable for larger-scale production kitchens where efficiency and workflow monitoring procedures are already in place.

- Disadvantages: It takes time to get acquainted with measuring food waste, and it requires many resources. This strategy is often associated with inaccurate estimates of total food waste, because it is organisationally difficult to keep track of, particularly if there are many small production kitchens involved.

If you pick Method B (an external partner sorts and measures food waste in randomly-selected public kitchens), please consider the following:

- Decide how many kitchen samples need to be taken, the time period in which the food waste must be collected and sorted, and the number of waste types the food waste needs to be sorted into (e.g. edible/ non-edible food waste).
- Advantage: this method can be used without involving the kitchen staff, which saves time and resources.
- Disadvantage: the kitchen staff do not necessarily feel ownership of the scheme, nor do they necessarily develop an understanding of where to intervene to prevent food waste.

If you pick Method C (the kitchen staff sorts the waste into food waste and other waste, and a waste disposal enterprise weighs the food waste), please consider the following:

- Advantage: this is a non-invasive method involving the kitchen staff. Employees become more aware of the food waste dimension in their kitchen.
- Disadvantage: separate containers for food waste need space, which might be a challenge for some kitchens.



Empty plate – happy face²⁴

²⁴ Photo credit: W. Troszka, Municipality of Rybnik

Variable portion sizes

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Caterers

Tool in a nutshell

Portions of public meals are often much too large, leading to increased food waste and/or unhealthy overeating. This tool shows how caterers can reduce their meal sizes to create “regular” and “small” portions. This way, the tool helps to decrease food waste and support customers towards healthier eating habits. The food portions in public canteens are often too large for the customer to consume entirely, leading to increased food waste and/or unhealthy overeating. In response to these issues, public catering providers can adjust their portion sizes to offer more suitable “regular” and “small” portions. This aligns with EU health, climate, and circular economy policies.

Steps to be taken

- Evaluate current portion sizes in terms of plate waste and consider adding a smaller portion size.
- Decide on what “smaller” means, e.g. two ladlefuls of soup for the regular and one ladleful for the small meal.
- Consider also providing differently sized serving cutlery.
- Decide on a pricing scheme for the smaller portion serving. It can either be made cheaper than the regular portion, or, instead of adjusting the price directly, extras such as a drink or dessert could be provided free of charge.
- Plates can be provided in two different sizes, or regular plates used for both portion sizes. If you decide to provide differently sized plates, you can also use dessert plates, if available.
- Inform the kitchen staff of the new approach and discuss it with them. Provide guidance material to help regulate portion sizes.
- If necessary, add the new price for small portions to the cash register system.
- Ensure the new portion size policy is communicated in all relevant detail (i.e. what it is, why it is being implemented, and how) to the customers.

More issues to consider

- This scheme enjoyed very positive feedback from the staff in the canteens of the Environmental State Office in North Rhine-Westphalia.
- One challenge facing caterers is that the number of small portions required can be very difficult to predict in the beginning. Consider introducing a pre-ordering system to determine demand.
- The demand for smaller portion sizes may also decrease the volumes of food procured.
- Small portions are often ordered in combination with a small salad and/ or a dessert.
- This tool can also be used by public authorities, as the inclusion of two portion sizes can be a criterion in calls for tenders when procuring a new catering service.

4.8 Gateway Resource efficiency

To professionally prepare and serve public meals, a broad range of resources and materials is required. These range from water and energy for cooking, to cleaning detergents, cling film, napkins, dishes, cutlery, etc. Using these materials always comes at an economic and environmental price. The motto “achieving more with less” frames the tools in this gateway. By making better use of available resources or cutting down on resource-heavy procedures, public meals can be a perfect showcase for a circular economy and resource efficiency. Packaging and plastic materials are two major contributors to environmental pollution, and their manufacture generates greenhouse gas emissions. This can be mitigated by encouraging procurers to make use of EU’s GPP criteria for water, energy and materials. Catering organisations and supply chains can, by innovative thinking and altering their routines, play an active role in creating solutions for the better use of resources. This way, public meals can offer direct routes towards the sustainable use of resources.

The tools presented here to help change the preparation and consumption of public meals contain innovative ways to avoid certain materials, reuse others, and reduce energy and water consumption. While they can be part of municipal and entrepreneurial policies, some are also suitable as well for procurers, while others offer hands-on approaches for kitchens and canteens.



There are many opportunities for circularity and sustainability by the public meal²⁵

List of tools in this gateway

- [Serving meals without trays](#)
- [Cook Cold as cooking method](#)
- [Reusable bottles for tap water](#)
- [Waterless cleaning](#)
- [Deposit take-away system](#)

²⁵ Photo credits: Romolo Tavani, Dreamstime.com, retrieved from [Navigating the sustainability ecosystem - Recycling Today](#)

Serving meals without trays

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool provides guidance on how to stop using trays. Instead of using trays, customers could collect their food on plates and drinks in glasses only, and carry these to their dining tables like at home. This requires customers to be informed, and may also entail process changes by the service personnel. Serving without trays saves economic, environmental, and human resources, in alignment with a range of EU sustainability strategies and policies.

Steps to be taken

- The service personnel and managers discuss, agree on, and plan a service without trays. Necessary changes are made to the serving line, and a separate pick-up point could also be added for drinks and bread, spreads, cutlery, and napkins as needed. Trays are removed from the serving line.
- Customers are informed about the change and how it will work.
- A single-plate-and-glass practice is introduced.
- The customer collects the salad, main course, and side dishes from the line onto the plate and then takes the drink to the dining table. Bread, spreads, cutlery, and napkins can be collected from a separate serving table in the dining room, in the immediate vicinity of the dining table.
- The customer can collect more food from the line without queuing, if this is mutually agreed, or from a separate serving point for extra food.
- The food service personnel help customers to adopt this new practice and collect customer feedback for possible future developments.

More issues to be considered

- Customers may dislike the service without trays to begin with, but will eventually accommodate the change.
- Catering personnel have reported better levels of occupational health, as heavy work on the wrists is reduced.
- It is possible that food and drink consumption will decrease, as collecting extra helpings requires more customer effort.

Cook Cold as cooking method

Origin of the tool: Finland Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

Compared to ordinary Cook and Serve and Cook and Chill meal manufacturing methods, Cook Cold, i.e., cold manufacturing, enables a continuous manufacturing process in the central, conventional or satellite kitchen. Manufacturing freshly cooked meals in this way saves energy and human resources as well as prevents food waste. The tool explains how the Cook Cold cooking/manufacturing method works. Thus, it can be compared with other cooking methods and this reasoning supports its implementation as the new method for cooking. In the Cook Cold manufacturing, a central, conventional or satellite kitchen can use raw or pre-cooked and microbiologically high-quality components that are cooked in GN containers (GN refers to Gastronorm, a European standard for professional kitchenware sizes). The method can be implemented with different dishes and easily modified by diverse components. The Cook Cold manufacturing requires a cold chain but saves energy and prevents food waste in manufacturing and catering. It addresses well EU's sustainability policy objectives.

Steps to be taken

- Food components are cold stored in central or conventional kitchens.
- Cook Cold manufacturing takes place in cooled kitchen spaces.
- Standardized recipes tested to apply for this type of manufacturing are to be followed.
- Cold and pre-processed raw materials are carefully weighed in accordance with the standardized recipes into GN containers.
- If the food is transported to the satellite kitchens, it can be stored there, and the necessary liquid is added to the food only before the food is cooked.
- The food is cooked just before serving, entailing the in-house temperature controls.

More issues to consider

Benefits:

- There is no manufacturing waste in the central kitchen, as pre-processed raw materials are used in cold cooking. Food waste is reduced when food is sent to the satellite kitchen based on an order, and it is possible to cook it in batches according to the number of customers.
- The food is of uniform quality because all GN containers have the same amount of ingredients based on weighing. Production process is smooth, of high quality, cost effective and environmentally friendly in many ways. The food is fresh and fragrant as cooking takes place in (satellite) kitchens. This increases customers' appetite and appreciation of food cooked on site.
- The work of service kitchen staff is more meaningful when they can participate in the food preparation process and finishing. The use of labour, equipment and transport is efficient and planned due to the continuous manufacturing process and reduced transport times.
- Cook Cold-prepared food does not need to be transported to the satellite kitchen daily, as the food can be well cold stored for 1 to 3 days (reduction in transport times).

Challenges:

- Cook Cold method needs recipes adapted for this specific cooking method. Dishes that need to be stewed for a long time and the so-called piece goods (e.g., spinach pancakes, meatballs, fish sticks) are not suitable for the Cook Cold method. This can cause the menu to become one-sided, which means that other cooking methods or industrially produced piece goods are needed in parallel. Sufficiently low temperatures must be maintained for manufacturing, storage, and transports. Cooling of the tap water is necessary to suit for Cook Cold method.

Requirements:

- Testing of standard recipes suitable for the Cook Cold method, proper space solutions and equipment, scheduled processes and training for the personnel. Uninterrupted cold chain (food temperature remains the same throughout $\leq +3^{\circ}\text{C}$ until the cooking takes place). There must be sufficient GN containers in the central kitchen due to reduced food distribution times and respective slower recovery of the containers.
- Informing employees, customers, and stakeholders in good time about the introduction of the new production method to ensure trust in the Cook Cold method and the organization of labour the method needs to operate. The same cloths can be used in hygienically descending order during the same cleaning route, such as food counter > table surface > chair surface.

Reusable bottles for tap water

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool shows how public authorities can promote the drinking of tap water from reusable bottles. Drinking tap water saves money, supports human health, and has a positive climate impact. The quality of tap water is high in many countries, and can be consumed instead of bottled mineral water. Drinking tap water saves money and supports human wellbeing through healthy water consumption. The climate impact of the practice is about 600 times smaller than that of consuming mineral water. This provision can be included in public procurement policies, and catering services can switch to using reusable bottles to help support it. This practice aligns well with policies for climate protection and public health.

Steps to be taken

- Identify the number of bottles required, and their sizes. Source offers and purchase suitable bottles.
- Allocate bottles to the catering facilities and, if appropriate, also to your institution's meeting rooms or break rooms. Inform staff about the bottles with instructions for their correct use and cleaning.

More issues to consider

- When purchasing the glass bottles (carafes), make sure they are easy to clean (i.e. dishwasher safe). It should be clearly communicated that stale tap water should not

be consumed. To improve the attractiveness of the scheme, consider engraving the glass bottles with a logo or a sustainability message. For engravings, it is best to procure bottles made of borosilicate glass suitable for sandblast engraving. Laser engraving, on the other hand, leads to splinters and an indistinct appearance.

Waterless cleaning of surfaces

Origin of the tool: Finland

Intended users: Caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool suggests environmentally friendly (moist) microfiber-based cleaning methods to save consumption of clean water, energy, and chemicals, as well as avoid straining property surfaces and structures. When waterless cleaning is introduced into premises, adequate level of cleanliness is achieved by using the moist hygienic microfiber cleaning cloths. This 'light' cleaning method guarantees clean kitchen facilities and food cleanliness (food safety) for customers. Microfiber cleaning cloths also improve work ergonomics and occupational well-being by using adjustable mop handle and no rubbing by hands, thereby protecting one's back and hands. Cleaning, possibly without detergents, reduces the environmental impact by saving water and detergents and extends the life cycle of interiors of buildings. Savings in economic, environmental, and human resources are in alignment with EU sustainability strategies and policies at large.

Steps to be taken

- Making the decision for waterless cleaning as a mode of operation is the first step. Motivate and familiarize personnel with the new way of working. Make microfiber cloths, adjustable mop arms and gloves (possibly a cleaning trolley for this equipment) available. Microfiber cloths can be of different colors (color coding) according to hygienic levels (e.g., green = cleanest, then blue, red and yellow).
- Plan the cleaning in terms of surface area and hygienic levels (e.g., counters, tables, chairs, floor) and test the timing for intended work. The same cloths can be used in hygienically descending order during the same cleaning route, such as food counter > table surface > chair surface. Use a scrub brush and detergent for greasy objects and floor drains.
- Schedule the mechanical washing of the microfiber cloths, if possible, so that the cloths are at a suitable moisture for use. Handle cleaning equipment hygienically so that the microfiber cloths are always washed in a washing machine and protective gloves are used to prevent the cloth from getting dirty and to protect the skin of the hands. Take the cloths directly from the wash, slightly moist when starting cleaning, or moisten the cloth manually with water or, if necessary, a detergent solution.
- Schedule the cleaning of the floor so it does not interfere with other activities. Clean floor surfaces with a floor care machine or in smaller areas with microfiber mops.

More issues to consider

- Often, spaces of food and meal production are washed with plenty of water and detergents, allowing also bacterial contamination and growth. Waterless cleaning

refers to cleaning with moist, absorbing and rubbing cloths, which are washed after use to be re-used. While the microplastics are a common problem, most of the particles – also from microfiber cloths – are detained at the wastewater treatment plants. Alternatives like cotton cloths generate many different environmental impacts which compare with the ones due to microfibers.

- Good quality microfiber cloths endure for a long time and can be labelled by the Nordic Swan with strict environmental requirements. These microfiber cloths offer first-rate cleaning performance without the use of cleaning chemicals; are durable (providing a long service life); contain limited amounts of environmentally hazardous and harmful substances; contribute to lowering emissions to water and the air; are gentle on the surface being cleaned.



Waterless cleaning with moist micro-fiber mop²⁶

²⁶ Photo credit: Antti Kallio, Finnish Professional Catering Association

Deposit take-away system

Origin of the tool: Germany Intended users: Caterers, customers, others

Tool in a nutshell

This tool helps users get started with the implementation of a system for replacing single-use packaging with reusable containers, tackling food waste and waste from packaging at the same time. The aim of this tool is to reduce food waste and packaging waste at the same time. Instead of creating bio-waste or deploying single-use materials like aluminium foil, Styrofoam boxes, or plastic bags for leftovers, caterers offer robust, reusable boxes for use on a deposit basis. The system could be implemented by catering companies or by public kitchens, and aligns with policies for climate protection and the circular economy.

Steps to be taken

- Agree with management about the costs for the system, a timeline for implementation, testing, and methods for monitoring success or failure.
- The work starts by assigning a person to be in charge of planning and organising the new deposit takeaway system. Develop a concept for the deposit takeaway system and discuss it with the kitchen team.
- Determine the necessary size, number, and functionality (i.e., suitability for dishwashers, freezing, and microwave use) of the boxes. Look for suitable suppliers and procure the boxes. Determine the deposit price. An example estimates to help start the project might include 30 boxes for 400 employees with a 10 Euro deposit.
- Organise the workflow in the kitchen and serving area to meet the requirements of the new system.
- Develop promotional material for the new system like flyers, posters, and emails.
- Pilot the system and adjust it accordingly.

More issues to consider

- The boxes can be imprinted with the company/ public authorities' logo. Separate, smaller boxes for sauces/dressings should be integrated in the larger boxes.
- Customers can use the boxes for taking leftovers with them. The canteen can also use the box system for selling food resources as takeaways (at a reduced rate).
- Be sure to consider food hygiene regulations and labelling requirements.



Different size municipal refund boxes in Rybnik, Poland²⁷

²⁷ Photo credit: Michał Koczy, Municipality of Rybnik

4.9 Gateway Working with Farmers

The awareness among procurers and caterers of the origin of their food and how it is produced is growing. Catering organisations and wholesalers look for greater biodiversity, lower emissions, seasonality, and a wider selection of fresh and innovative products. This makes public meals a marketing channel for farmers, and one that calls for specialties as well as staple foods to satisfy demand in diverse settings from school lunches to premium receptions for the government. Dialogue and collaboration between buyers and sellers involved in the provision of public meals are the way forward to achieving a more diversified approach to the food supply. The market dialogue may stimulate demand for new crops or new cultivation methods, leading to a more diversified food production, in turn benefitting biodiversity and socio-economic conditions in rural areas. Collaboration with farmers is also important from a food education perspective.

The tools in this gateway provide inspiration to procurers, catering organisations, and supply chain actors for how to extend collaboration with farmers.



Farmers provide fresh produce for the food service plate²⁸

List of tools in this gateway

- *Learning dialogue for farmers and caterers*
- *Mapping organic farmers as suppliers*

²⁸ [Time to revolutionise the way we produce and consume food \(the-parliament-magazine.eu\)](https://the-parliament-magazine.eu) photo Adobe Stock

Learning dialogue for farmers and caterers

Origin of the tool: Russia

Intended users: Policy makers, procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

This tool aims at creating new trade in food produce between farmers, small-scale processors, and catering companies through a series of dialogues. Topics discussed may include procurement bureaucracy for farmers, as well as availability, processing, and packaging issues of food items for caterers. To map the potential for improved trade, information about contract technicalities and integration into product development options often require clarification and prospective action surveys which can be developed in this forum. This kind of trading serves state and municipal policies for food security and regional development, and supports biodiversity policies through its potential to drive stakeholders towards organic farming options. This tool provides a concept for a dialogue between these stakeholders to get to know each other and discuss the potentials and obstacles to business relationships.

Steps to be taken

- A series of dialogical meetings about potential and prospective trading in food items is organised with talks by all parties.
- While catering organisations are few and often well-known, suppliers may not be; agricultural associations and other official sources may be able to help provide supplier contact details.
- Share the invitations broadly and openly to enable as many participants as possible to enter into the dialogues.
- Organisers can use a mix of approaches, such as free talks, topical workshops, expert lectures, and study visits.
- Involving participants with specific expertise can help the group stay up to date with developments in other fields and find solutions in a range of problem areas.
- Dialogical meetings may not yield quick results, as both learning and implementing developments take time by all parties; therefore, a medium to long-term dialogue process should be anticipated.

More issues to consider

- Discussing trade often includes confidential or business-sensitive information. This should be borne in mind when thinking about the openness of the dialogues.
- Sharing information about collaborative options and emphasising that talks which may include competitors are taking place in a learning environment with the aim of improving overall trade, may help overcome some of these obstacles.

Mapping organic farmers as suppliers

Origin of the tool: Poland Intended users: Policy makers, public administration, procurers, caterers

Tool in a nutshell

The aim of this tool is to enable the procurers of a public institution (e.g. school, kindergarten, nursery, etc.) to more easily procure organic foodstuffs by providing a list of local organic farmers and other organic producers. This is especially important in countries without well-developed organic food supply chains. A detailed list of contacts is the result of an intensive internet search for local organic producers conducted by the public procurer, followed by enquiries at the organic certification office and phone calls with the organic farmers.

Steps to be taken

- Set up an empty list in which the details of the farms and producers you will find can be stored: e.g., farm name, products available, location, distance to your institution, contact details, and whether the farm is able to deliver these products when needed.
- Search the internet for (a list of) certified organic farms located close (e.g., within 50 km) to your institution. Select only certified farms, so as to be certain that the food is of high quality. Note down all relevant details.
- Check the distances between the organic farms and the public institution on a map. Use an online map service, e.g., Google maps, to help with this. Note down the results and then select those producers closest to your institution.
- Check the products the individual organic farms offer and select those farms that offer products of interest for your public institution (e.g. potatoes, fruits, carrots, etc.)
- The resulting list will be very general, often without any contact details of the farmers. For farms without sufficient contact information (e.g., phone, email), ask the control bodies of organic enterprises for permission to obtain this data. Control bodies are institutions which control and certify organic farms and enterprises. Some of them publish farmers' addresses online, others only publish the names online; and some provide no data at all without filling in appropriate forms.
- Contact the most suitable farmers (indicators: distance, products available) by phone and ask whether they would be interested in selling organic products to your institution.
- Once the approval from all collected producers has been obtained, the tendering process for the supply of organic products to the institution can be launched. This means that all the necessary steps laid out in public procurement regulation have to be implemented, depending on the monetary value involved, and whether you are a public or a private procurer.

More issues to consider

- Instead of each institution having to conduct this procedure, it would be ideal to centrally provide such a list of organic producers, including their contacts (if they agree) and perhaps also an online map. It could also be the work of an organic producers' association to promote its members. As farmers are usually very busy, they will appreciate your patience when dealing with them. The best time to contact farmers is in winter (November to February).

5 Background to the Toolkit

5.1 Methodological approach

The development of the toolkit is based on a combined approach including desk research, piloting and stakeholder consultations as described in the following sections. The toolkit is based on a qualitative research design that has been planned and executed to capture and condense findings building on a participatory approach (stakeholder consultations and piloting). The international and inter-disciplinary team, that developed the StratKIT Sustainability Toolkit includes academics from universities and public research institutions; SMEs; representatives of public procurement and city government; managers from private catering companies; trade organisations; and a public-sector interest organization based in Brussels.

Initially, desk research was conducted in all StratKIT countries to elaborate a mapping of the public meals, supply chains, and organisation of public procurement of food and catering services. The results were compiled in the [Joint Baltic Sea Region Report for Sustainable Public Procurement and Catering Services](#). The results of the Joint BSR Report clearly indicated that changing procurement, production or serving functions required an approach adapted to the local condition and, that more stakeholder groups would need to collaborate. Another important conclusion from the Joint BSR report was that some of the major challenges and opportunities connected with sustainability of the public meals were shared by all the BSR countries. This pointed towards a toolkit that could be used in several countries, thus a generic toolkit.

The next phase of the toolkit development was targeted at understanding and prioritising “sustainability”. For this purpose, each of the BSR countries developed a national version of the Tree model (Figure 2). The collection of Tree models from all BSR countries were compiled and used to consult local stakeholders about opportunities and challenges for making changes to achieve more sustainable public meals. These consultations addressed the external context (markets and regulatory aspects), procurement of food and catering services, and operations for production and provision of the meal. Cross-country validation was carried out to ensure that the findings were valid in the BSR context.

These consultations resulted in a collection of key topics that were considered of high importance for achieving more sustainable public meals. The Tree-model and results of consultations are compiled in the [Baltic Sea Region Dynamic Sustainability Model for Public Procurement and Catering Services](#). Based on the Joint BSR report and the BSR Expansion Model Report, the outline of the toolkit was in place. The following step was to produce the collection of tools.

5.2 Stakeholder consultations and development of tools

The aim of producing a toolkit is to achieve a result that the intended users would make use of. This calls for ensuring that the content aligns with the needs of the users, and that the features of the toolkit are designed to meet the requirements of the users, thus a participatory approach. The project has made use of stakeholder consultations through national workshops, international conferences and workshops, interviews, and pilot testing, Figure 6. Stakeholder consultations have taken place during 2019-2021 as face-to-face and online events. Through the participatory actions important information have been brought forward:

- Information that could be used as content of the tools;
- Clarifications about the reader-friendliness of the text;
- Validation of the sustainability topics and their relevance;
- Explanations about intended users and how the tools might be used by practice;
- Confirmation of the approach: generic toolkit that could be used by many different stakeholders.

Each of the project partner countries have established many connections to policy makers, public servants in procurement functions, managers of providers of catering services, food processors and wholesalers, and various organisations and, providers of training.

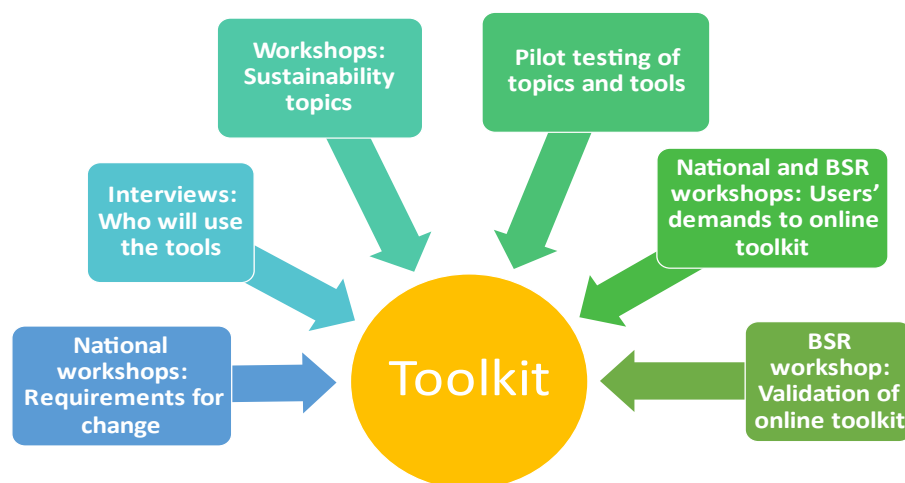


Figure 6: Stakeholder consultations for the toolkit development process

It was evident from the data gatherings and various stakeholder consultations that, the toolkit would need to appear as **generic**, easy-to-use and interesting. The generic profile was chosen because of the vast diversity of scales and the many ways to organise and produce meals in the public sector. The way meal provision was organised in location A would not work for location B, even if both locations would appear in the same country or the same segment (e.g., school).

At this stage of the development process, it was regarded as important to work on a generic level to avoid local or contextual details and, to ensure the that tools would appear useful to a wider audience in several countries. The StratKIT partners elaborated a collection of tentative tools based on project reports and the national and international stakeholder consultations. The tentative tools were elaborated to meet a common format featuring these elements:

- Why is this topic xx relevant in a sustainability context of the public meal?
- Who is the intended user of the tool?
- Step by step – explaining the change process

- Additional information

These joint efforts led to a collection of nearly 80 tentative tools. The next step was the editing to avoid repetitive tools and to ensure a proper alignment of the writing. The edited collection counted 52 tools and these tools would form the online toolkit. However, before moving on to the development of the online toolkit, the collection of 70 tools was submitted for pilot testing.

5.3 Pilot testing of tools

As the toolkit should appear of relevance to an international group of users it was necessary to carry out piloting in more ways. To ensure a basic approval and general understanding of the tools, the partners asked stakeholders in all BSR countries to proof-read at least five randomly chosen tools. Stakeholders were asked to comment about the text (easy to read and easy to grasp the message) and the relevance of the content (i.e., the topic and the steps to be taken). By using the randomly-chosen approach, it was ensured that tools developed in one country were proof-read in another country. This approach was chosen to reduce the embeddedness of local issues in the text for the tools.

The second level pilot testing was application of the tools. This approach implied to ask stakeholders to make a plan for how to follow the “step-by-step” of a tool. First, the stakeholder, for example a kitchen professional, would choose a tool. Then, the stakeholder would draw up a plan for how the tool’s procedure could be applied in the stakeholder’s context. With the example of a kitchen professional and a tool for changing menus towards more plant-based food items, the local context could include considerations about budget, access to training resources, already gained experience, and kitchen resources. This way of piloting was also carried out with a cross-BSR approach. The recommendations from stakeholders have been used to fine-tune the procedures listed in the tools.

The third level pilot testing (real-life pilots) was very comprehensive as it involved intense collaboration with stakeholders. The main aim of the real-life pilots was twofold: 1) use real-life conditions to draw out learnings about changes for sustainability from every-day challenges and opportunities by public meals, and 2) adapt the tools to increase their user-friendliness to real-life conditions. Table 1 shows how tools produced in one country were piloted in real-life conditions in other countries.

Table 1: Piloted tools in collaboration with stakeholders during the project

Country	Name of the Tool
Denmark	Three ways to measure food waste, Organizing training for plant-based cooking,
Finland	Sharing sustainability information, Waterless cleaning,
Estonia	Procurement criteria for organic food, Procurement criteria for catering plant-based food, Procurement criteria to reduce food waste, Measuring food waste in school canteens, Strategy for reducing food waste, School catering tackling food waste,
Germany	Tender template for sustainable catering services, Checklist for sustainable catering service procurement, Setting up the canteen commission
Poland	School catering tackling food waste, Variable portion size, Appealing plant-based meals for seniors, School Gardening for Sustainable Food Education, Waterless cleaning, Deposit take-away system, Strategy for reducing food waste, Lectures on benefits of organic food, Mapping organic farmers as suppliers, Sustainable diet training for public institutions, Campaigning and cooking for awareness raising, Teachers tackling school waste, Procurement criteria for organic food,
Russia	School Gardening for Sustainable Food Education, Culinary workshops: Grow, Cook, Eat.

The core advantage of the real-life pilots was this method enabled the inclusion of more stakeholder groups into one pilot test and, by this contributed to address the collaborative aspect of the change process as well as challenges and opportunities for various stakeholder groups.

Based on the three levels of pilot testing, the collection of tools was regarded as completed. The collection of tools is available in Chapter 4, and online www.sustainable-public-meal.eu.

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