



Local Governments
for Sustainability
EUROPE



Rolling out Sustainable School Meals:

A guide for European Cities



SCHOOLFOOD
4CHANGE

ICLEI Europe
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1. Introduction and objectives

This guidance aims to offer **practical recommendations** for cities wishing to explore the transformative potential of SF4C's Triple Approach – including the Whole School Food Approach, Planetary Health Diets & Cooking and Innovative, Sustainable and Healthy Public Food Procurement.

Based on the experiences and lessons learned from SF4C cities and other organisations involved in the project, this document should help all interested cities and schools better understand **what steps are needed** to start putting **SF4C actions** into practice.

2. Navigating this guide

Following an overall introduction on the importance of school meals and the SF4C project in section three **Setting the Scene**, section four **The Triple Approach** focuses on exploring each of the three pillars of SF4C: the Whole School Food Approach (WSFA), Planetary Health Diets and Cooking, and Innovative, Sustainable and Healthy Public Food Procurement. Each section offers **actionable steps, tips**, and links to useful **resources and reports** developed in SF4C. **Good practice** from SF4C cities further complement showing concrete examples of how the activities have been implemented on the ground.

The end of the report includes a **short summary for cities**, outlining key steps suggested for implementing future SF4C related actions.

SF4C Triple Approach - colours:



Good Practice Title

Good Practice Page:

- + Country
- + City
- + School

TITLE: LUNCH POLL

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA

CITY: NITRA

SCHOOL: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KNIEŽAĽA PRIBINU



PILLAR OF THE WSFA: POLICY & LEADERSHIP

DESCRIPTION:

After joining in the SF4C and SZŠ program, an Action Group for Healthy Eating was created at the school, which consists of the head of the school canteen and the head cook, a representative of the city office, teachers, students and parents.

Both students and parents took part in a poll on what they would like on a plate in the school canteen and they voted in the school's edupage software. The second step was to evaluate the food. Pupils voted how they liked the school lunch on a flipchart right in the school canteen. A picture menu is also being prepared for the little ones, but also for the bigger pupils, so that we can all look forward to what awaits us. During the last school year, real photos of food were taken, and this year we will create a picture menu from them.

This survey is part of improving the quality and involving as many diners as possible in the process of preparing food in the school canteen. We used the answers from the questionnaires when creating the menu and choosing suitable dishes. The goal was to attract more diners and find out their taste preferences, which we succeeded in doing. Pupils are satisfied and do not opt out of lunch when they know that what they like will be cooked, and also those who are registered will actually eat lunch and this eliminates the amount of waste in the school canteen.

Whole School Food Approach pillar



TO WHOM WAS THIS ACTION ADDRESSED?:



PUPILS

REFERENCES:

- >> skutocnezdravaskola.sk - 01
- >> skutocnezdravaskola.sk - 02
- >> skutocnezdravaskola.sk - 03

Good Practice description

Source with clickable Link

Additional information: (e.g. facts & figures, photos)



3. Setting the Scene

3.1 Why school meals?

Schools are unique environments where all children, also from diverse backgrounds – socio-economic, cultural, religious, and geographical – come together. This diversity, combined with the wide range of stakeholders that interact (directly, indirectly) in school systems, makes schools powerful environments for driving societal improvements in food systems:

• Contributing to Sustainability and Climate Goals

School meals serve as an essential link in the food value chain, connecting food production to consumption. By adopting sustainable practices, school meal programmes can contribute significantly to environmental and climate objectives. For example, sourcing organic produce, consuming less animal products, and reducing food waste in schools can lower carbon footprints while supporting local food systems.

• Addressing Social Inequality and Health Issues

In the EU, almost 25% of children are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and in the European region, one in three school-aged children is overweight or obese. According to the World Health Organisation, this is notably due to the environments where children are growing up, which discourage good nutrition and physical activity. Transforming children's food environments is thus critical, also knowing that obesity rates are only projected to increase – by 61% for boys and 57% for girls – by 2035 (WHO, 2023).

Sustainable school meal programmes can directly address these issues by providing access to nutritious meals and teaching children the importance of healthy eating, how their food is produced, its impact on the climate, teaching them how to cook (life skills), ultimately enhancing both immediate health outcomes and long term public health.

• Empowering Future Generations

Educating children about food origins, healthy diets and how these all related to human and planetary health teaches them to make more informed choices as adults. By promoting sustainable eating habits within schools, children and adolescents take this knowledge with them and in turn influence their families and communities, creating a ripple effect that helps to strengthen food systems and promotes healthier, more sustainable lifestyles.

• Setting up Ambitious Goals in the City's Food Policy

Integrating school food strategies into broader food governance frameworks – at local, regional and national levels – holds great potential in addressing the multiple environmental, social and economic challenges pertaining to food systems. Cities can use schools as practical entry points for more systemic changes in their food system, addressing important issues like urban agriculture (e.g. school gardens), procurement practices, food waste reduction and circularity, nutrition, and social equity. Changes in food procurement and menu planning can have a direct impact on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, while supporting local economies by sourcing ingredients locally, produced with less water, energy and pesticides (improving soil health and fostering biodiversity) and prioritising seasonal produce.

3.2 About SchoolFood4Change

»» **SchoolFood4Change** (SF4C) is a four-year EU-funded project, which began in January 2022 aiming to harness the transformative potential of school meals to drive systemic societal change by offering innovative, locally adaptable solutions for schools, meal providers, public authorities, and policymakers. The project took a holistic, multi-level approach, bringing together experts in sustainable food procurement, nutrition, and education. Its efforts focused on a Triple Approach, relying on three key pillars: a whole school approach to food (Whole School Food Approach – WSFA), Planetary Health Diets and Cooking, and Innovative, Sustainable and Healthy Public Food Procurement. Through an extensive network spanning 12 countries in Europe, the actions have impacted over 600,000 children in over 3,000 schools. »» [Watch this video to find out more!](#)

3.3 The role of cities and regions in promoting sustainable school food

Local and regional governments have the strategic power to influence public health and social and environmental well-being through a range of policy interventions. When it comes to school food and meals, education and public procurement are the main tools for cities to promote and influence the adoption of sustainable and healthy food options.

To effectively support schools, cities shall gather political support, ensure effective coordination across municipal departments, and foster collaboration and partnerships with relevant stakeholders and initiatives. Setting up cross-department groups (or task forces) to engage key people, departments and external actors (e.g. food policy councils, provincial or regional government) are essential to coordinate and streamline actions, and to ensure effective implementation in schools.

4. The Triple Approach



- Whole School Food Approach
- Planetary Health Diets and Cooking
- Innovative, Sustainable and Healthy Public Food Procurement



4.1. Whole School Food Approach

4.1.1. What is it?

The **Whole School Food Approach (WSFA)** or taking an **integrated approach to food and nutrition** is a holistic method which aims to develop a healthy and sustainable food culture in and around schools. Taking a WSFA means connecting what is served with what is taught and experienced and the wider environments and communities in which food is produced and consumed. It embeds food into curricula and school culture, fostering participation, awareness, and shared responsibility among pupils, teachers, families, and kitchen teams, thereby shaping both demand and behaviour that influence procurement and menu design.

4.1.2. Who does it benefit?

WSFA's educational mission goes beyond the school setting, aiming to influence everyone involved in school food and meal programmes. Accordingly, **implementing the WSFA requires involving all stakeholders** – such as **meal providers, municipal authorities (responsible for food procurement, schools, education, health, sustainability), farmers, caregivers, and schoolchildren** – in learning and interdisciplinary activities that will help them understand the origins of food, its effects on their bodies, and its impacts on the climate and environment. Ultimately, this aims to foster the development of a new comprehensive vision for sustainable school meals.

4.1.3. How should it be implemented?

To develop a WSFA, a school needs to work on four interconnected strategies: **a school food policy (Pillar A), food supply and consumption (Pillar B), food education (Pillar C)**, and the broader (physical) **school environment (Pillar D)**. Each of the four pillars has a set of actionable criteria. Since each school begins its journey toward achieving a WSFA from a different starting point, the programme is divided into **three levels of implementation: Bronze, Silver, and Gold** – each of them corresponding to a specific set of criteria. As a first step, schools must strive to meet all the criteria for the Bronze level. After reaching Bronze, schools can set new goals and work towards additional criteria to advance to the Silver and Gold levels. A useful tool for evaluating the school's current status, identifying its starting point, and pinpointing areas for improvement is the **>> WSFA School Food Culture Review**.


More details about the pillars and the criteria under each level of implementation can be found in the >> WSFA Practical Guide For Schools.

In the tables below, you will find a comprehensive overview of the key actions which cities and schools need to undertake to implement the WSFA.

What the city should prepare for:

| Actions | Tips |
|--|---|
| <p>Develop an Action Plan and assess resources available at the city or municipal level.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a first step, assess available resources in your city – both in terms of staff and budgets. Develop an Action Plan and decide how many schools you want to test/pilot the WSFA. <p> Focus on two to three schools at a time.</p> |
| <p>Identify and select the school(s) where the WSFA will be piloted.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure to contact the schools directly and start with those where you may already have closer contacts. Make sure you know what you can offer and how you can contribute to the school's implementation of the WSFA, e.g., by setting aside financial resources to support activities (such as farm-to-school twinning). |
| <p>Help schools get started and support them along the whole implementation process.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the School Food Working Group in assessing what already exists in schools through the School Food Culture Review (see above) and in developing an Action Plan. Make sure you can regularly be present in the schools to provide tailored support (e.g. if schools struggle to find motivated participants, the city can help set up incentives). |
| <p>Ensure there is interdepartmental collaboration at city level in implementing a WSFA.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate the WSFA concept to all relevant city departments/colleagues (e.g. by organising a cross-department meeting). Make sure the implementation of the WSFA is integrated in all relevant policies and projects. Ensure that implementing a WSFA is not the work of only one person at city level. |

What the school should prepare for:

| Actions | Tips |
|--|--|
| Establish a School Food Working Group . | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring together motivated school leaders, teachers, kitchen teams, to set up a school food policy around health and sustainability.• Make sure to involve schoolchildren in the School Food Working Group's activities to foster ownership and accountability and boost educational impact. |
| Develop an Action Plan . | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once a shared vision for the school has been created, develop an Action Plan setting short-, medium- and long-term goals. <p> Don't be too ambitious. Try to identify no more than two to three goals or actions to pursue each year.</p> |
| Outline a strategy for follow-up, development, and evaluation . | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schedule up to four meetings per year e.g. as follows:• Meeting 1: creating the Action Plan and identifying first steps.• Meeting 2-3: checking on progress and planning next steps.• Meeting 4: assessing results (including achievements, obstacles). |

Further information can be found in [WSFA Practical Guide For Schools](#) (paragraph 1.1).

4.1.4. GOOD PRACTICE FROM SCHOOLFOOD4CHANGE PARTNER CITIES

This section highlights examples of how the various pillars of the WSFA have been implemented in cities and schools across Europe.

Further case studies are available in the document “WSFA Yearly State of Play”,
[>> 2023 edition](#) and the [>> 2024 edition](#)



TITLE: LUNCH POLL

COUNTRY: SLOVAKIA

CITY: NITRA

SCHOOL: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KNIEŽAŤA PRIBINU



PILLAR OF THE WSFA:

POLICY & LEADERSHIP

DESCRIPTION:

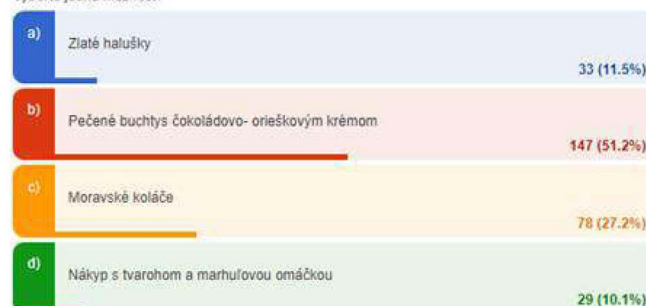
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Vyberte jednu možnosť:



TO WHOM WAS THIS ACTION ADDRESSED?



PUPILS

REFERENCES:

- >> [skutocnezdravaskola.sk - 01](https://skutocnezdravaskola.sk)
- >> [skutocnezdravaskola.sk - 02](https://skutocnezdravaskola.sk)
- >> [skutocnezdravaskola.sk - 03](https://skutocnezdravaskola.sk)

TITLE: SALAD BAR

COUNTRY: BELGIUM

CITY: GHENT

SCHOOL: BOARDING SCHOOL POLLUX



PILLAR B:

FOOD & SUSTAINABILITY

DESCRIPTION:

At the Boarding School, a new chapter in health and well-being has begun with the introduction of a salad bar. Recognising the unique needs of their diverse student body, including a growing number of athletes, they have made **healthy, nutritious meals a cornerstone of daily life.**

The **salad bar offers an array of fresh vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, and wholesome grains, designed to fuel the mind and body.** Beyond the athletic benefits, this initiative symbolises a commitment to holistic well-being. It encourages all students to make mindful choices about their diet, empowering them to take control of their health and be the best version of themselves.

The introduction of the salad bar has not only transformed the dining experience for students but has also **empowered the kitchen staff in profound ways.** Taking full ownership of this initiative, the kitchen team is proud to go above and beyond in supporting the health and well-being of the youth. In addition to creating nourishing meals, the staff is committed to sustainability. Instead of letting any leftovers go to waste, they offer them to students the next day, allowing them to top off their lunchboxes with wholesome, fresh ingredients. This thoughtful practice ensures that nothing goes to waste, fostering a culture of mindful consumption and respect for the food they prepare.



TITLE: FRESH PRODUCE STRAIGHT FROM THE SCHOOL GARDEN

COUNTRY: CZECH REPUBLIC

CITY: VELTEZE

SCHOOL: VELTEZE KINDERGARTEN



PILLAR C:

EDUCATION & LEARNING

DESCRIPTION:

The children of 'Velteze Kindergarten' take an **active role in caring for their school garden all year round**. They plant, grow, water, and harvest fresh produce, learning about the process of growing food.

The garden's harvest is mainly used for snacks children pick, wash, and cut the produce before enjoying it. The school cooks also incorporate the fresh vegetables into salads and meals.

In late August, the children harvested a large amount of fresh tomatoes, which the cooks used to prepare a delicious lunch for both the children and teachers.



REFERENCES:

City council commison on education:

>> kutecznezdravaskola.cz

TITLE: FOOD CLIMATE FESTIVAL

COUNTRY: DENMARK

CITY: COPENHAGEN

SCHOOL: LOCAL DAYCARE CENTRES & THE SCHOOLS NEARBY



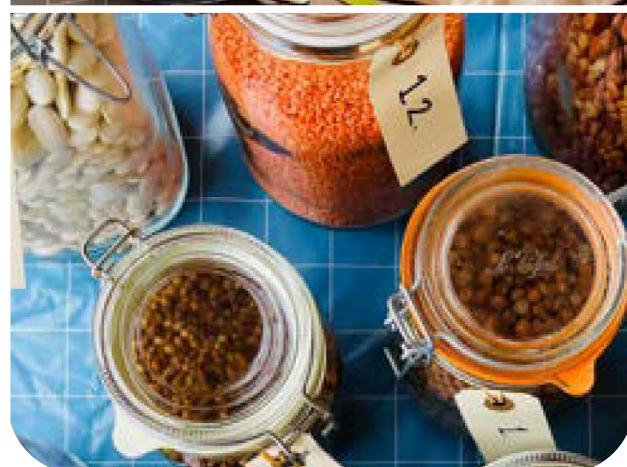
PILLAR D: COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP

DESCRIPTION:

The City of Copenhagen has collaborated with three nurseries (preschools) to develop a concept for a **local food festival to promote healthy and sustainable school meals, and to engage the local community in fund activities related food and nutrition.**

The festival is supported by the Copenhagen Food Strategy and SchoolFood4Change, both of which include and foresee food education activities. Children are encouraged to discover new flavours and recipes and together with their parents, grandparents, neighbours and friends, learn about new ingredients, their properties, origin and provenance. The recipes are made available to festival participants. The local food festival also takes the form of an 'open canteen party' and is held at a suitable location in the local community.

In Copenhagen, the first festival took place in September 2025. The three daycare centres invited all parents, neighbours and the nearest schools to take part in the festival in a nearby park. The activities focused on ingredients that were unfamiliar to many people, such as squid. In addition, the cooks from the three daycare centres served dishes from their own kitchens and the children helped with the preparation and serving of the food.



TITLE: FORUM KÜCHE PROGRAMME

COUNTRY: GERMANY

CITY: BREMEN



DESCRIPTION:

In Bremen (Germany), **the Forum Küche (kitchen) Programme is committed to reshaping how schools and kindergartens approach food.** Its Protokitchen model encourages schools to adopt a Whole School Food Approach across four areas: policy, supply and consumption, education, and the school environment. By maximising the involvement and sense of ownership of kitchen staff, teachers, caregivers, and suppliers, schools manage to guarantee healthy and nutritious meals without additional cost, and in line with the recommendations of the German Nutrition Society. Forum Küche supports this transition through on-site guidance, joint cooking sessions, and collaborative policy development. The Forum Küche programme also invests in food education: cooks receive free training on preparing wholesome meals within budget, while teachers learn to turn lunchtimes into social learning opportunities. Networking events connect professionals with local farmers, helping to build shorter supply chains. In addition, **every year the Schoolchildren's Enterprise Award rewards student led businesses ideas to improve services at their schools that embrace sustainability and the Forum Küche principles.** Winning teams take part in cooking workshops that highlight climate-friendly diets, reinforcing both learning and motivation.

TITLE: TIPS FOR DINNER

COUNTRY: ITALY

CITY: CUNEO



DESCRIPTION:

To involve stakeholders outside the school, Cuneo (Italy) has taken a family-oriented approach by linking school meals to home practices. Through the municipal school food service portal, **the city offers "Tips for Dinner," daily suggestions designed to complement the school lunch menu.** These dinner ideas are built around seasonality and menu rotation, and families can also draw on cookbooks featuring the most elaborate dishes. In this way, children's nutrition is supported throughout the day, while caregivers become active partners in promoting healthy habits. The initiative helps extend the impact of school food services and strengthens collaboration between the municipality, catering providers, and households.

TITLE: DKCHEF PROJECT

COUNTRY: FRANCE
CITY: DUNKERQUE



DESCRIPTION:

In Dunkerque (France), creativity and participation underpin a set of engaging initiatives. **The DKchef project invites children aged seven to eleven to work with local cooks, learning to cook while discovering budgeting, product labels, and the value of local food systems.** Visits to farms, and professional kitchens make the experience concrete, and the dishes created may later be included in school catering menus. Complementing this focus on food, **Dunkerque has introduced the “quarter of sport practice” - short, structured sessions during lunch breaks where children try out different sports and further develop their motor skills.** This combined emphasis on diet and activity encourages healthier lifestyles while making learning enjoyable.

TITLE: SCHOOLCHILDREN’S COMMITTEE FOR CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE RECIPES

COUNTRY: FRANCE
CITY: STRASBOURG



DESCRIPTION:

Strasbourg (France) is committed to promoting the importance of cultural diversity in food. Meal satisfaction surveys revealed children’s interests in dishes that reflect their origins, such as African inspired recipes. To address this, the city is establishing schoolchildren committees in schools so that recipe seasoning can better match children’s habits and cultures. Themed meals are regularly added to the menus of other cafeterias to open taste buds to cultural diversity.



4.2. Planetary Health Diets and Cooking

4.2.1. What is it?

By Planetary Health Diets and Cooking, SF4C refers to an integrated approach to school cooking that promotes healthier, **tastier, more nutritious, and environmentally conscious school menus and dishes**. This approach relies on a range of actions such as the protein transition (an increase in plant based foods), a reduction in salt and sugar, and the promotion of minimally processed foods. In practice, this means introducing more fruit, vegetables, whole grains and legumes and reducing animal products, while ensuring that meals are enjoyable and appealing to children, thereby preventing food waste and increasing nutritional intake. It also highlights the **crucial role of school cooks** in fostering healthy eating habits, supporting their position as key players within the school system. Training of cooks, chefs and kitchen teams plays a key role in this part of the SF4C Triple Approach – to strengthen the capacity and visibility of cooks and kitchen staff (and thereby, the food) to co-create and deliver appealing healthy meals. Training provides a bridge between educational goals and procurement regulations, translating policy ambitions into everyday practice while generating new insights that feed back into both learning and tender design.

4.2.2. Who does it benefit?

School cooks must be at the forefront of transitioning to planetary health diets. They are uniquely positioned to inspire change by preparing meals that align with health and sustainability goals. However, **responsibility extends beyond cooks to include municipal authorities and other urban food actors**. Cities are uniquely placed to form a supportive network together to create the conditions necessary for this transition. Ultimately, schoolchildren, caregivers, and educators also play a key role in embracing and advocating for these changes.

4.2.3. How should it be implemented?

Implementation begins with empowering school cooks as agents of change. In this area of work, SF4C provides professional training programmes – both in-person and online – and provides recipe suggestions to equip cooks with the knowledge and skills to prepare menus using healthy, sustainable, locally sourced and culturally significant ingredients while reducing food waste. Training is built upon three foundational pillars:

- **Food Preferences:** recipes are tailored to enhance children's acceptance of food by considering cultural, religious, individual, and nutritional needs. This fosters inclusivity and respect for diverse dietary practices.
- **Progressive Exposure and Circular Cooking:** strategies and menus gradually shift toward the adoption of diets that benefit both human and planetary health, building on early and gradual introduction of foods to increase familiarity and acceptance over time. Circular cooking principles maximise ingredient use and reduce food waste and its associated environmental impact.
- **Active Learning:** school meals are treated as an opportunity for participatory food education, fostering a sense of community and creating a shared learning environment. This approach integrates nutrition education into the daily lives of children, enhancing food literacy.

For more information about this approach, please check the **>> School Menu Design Handbook**, and the **>> Recipe Handbook**, containing 42 recipes specially designed for use in European schools.

In the table below, you will find a comprehensive overview of the key actions that schools and cities need to undertake to support Planetary Healthy Diets and Cooking.

What the city should prepare for:

| Actions | Tips |
|---|---|
| <p>Map existing training programmes for healthy and sustainable school meals in your city, and identify the schools involved.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your mapping, you can consider training sessions dedicated to kitchen and canteen staff, but also initiatives targeted at teachers, caregivers, and other relevant audiences. |
| <p>Identify related training gaps and competences that need to be developed, building on the three foundational pillars listed above (Food Preferences, Progressive Exposure and Circular Cooking, Active Learning).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If some training programmes already exist, you can consider delivering these training as complementary modules/sessions. |
| <p>Identify pilot schools and target groups to engage.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary target group may vary based on the management and procurement model adopted by the school (e.g. if the school relies on external providers, the main target group would be the catering company). • You can also consider the possibility of inviting other groups to join the workshops, e.g. cooks working in hospitals, senior care homes or other public institutions, and private canteens. |
| <p>Identify and engage cook trainers in the training design.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure their buy-in and interest, and to build confidence and ownership among cook trainers, it is essential to engage them as early as possible in the design of the training programme. This will allow them to feel heard and valued as a key stakeholder in the school system, and to cater the training to the concrete challenges they face. |

Define the modules, goals, and delivery format for the training.

- Below is a summary of key aspects to address when designing the training programme:

- **Modules:** agree on the number of sessions, title and content, duration of each session, and timeline (start/end) of the overall training;

- **Goal:** identify the Handbook dimensions addressed in each session;

- **Delivery format:** define the format of each session (in-person, online, hybrid). While the in-person component is key, it is highly recommended to offer a hybrid format whenever possible in order to reach a wider audience.

Assess impact and amplify training outcomes.

- Assessing the initial training's impact can help address any remaining gaps while laying the ground for further dissemination/amplification. For example, results can be shared with the wider public by organising roundtables with schoolchildren, families, teachers and other stakeholders, or by engaging other schools.

What the city should prepare for:

| Actions | Tips |
|---|---|
| <p>Build a network of stakeholders willing to contribute to the project.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As a first step, focus on getting key stakeholders on board – from the headmaster to the teachers, kitchen/cafeteria staff and caregivers. This can take the form of a workshop/roundtable to gather perspectives on the main needs and challenges as seen by different stakeholders. |
| <p>Host theoretical and practical sessions of the training.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When planning for sessions, check the availability of school spaces (e.g. school cafeterias or restaurants, kitchen, classrooms). |
| <p>Host cooking workshops in the school cafeterias and/or in the classrooms.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When planning for the cooking workshop, assess the equipment needed to carry out the workshops and identify possible timeslots (before/after lunch in the canteen, or during class time in the classroom). |

CANTEEN DAYS

A great complementary activity to organise alongside the trainings is the “Canteen Day”, an **in-person event for schoolchildren, teachers, families, and the wider local community**, designed to promote food education on healthy and sustainable food habits while emphasising the role of families in driving change.

This event should be **organised by the city with the help of schools, cafeteria/ canteen staff, and local food actors** and should take place in a public, easily accessible location such as schoolyards, classrooms, canteens, community halls, parks, markets, or local farms to ensure wide participation.

The activities to host during the event can vary and adapt to the target group(s):

- For children, activities might include workshops on international dishes, offering a fun way to explore global cultures;
- Teachers could be involved in discussions on how to make the canteen a welcoming space for food education;
- Families and the wider public could engage as participants in a “Festival of Taste,” celebrating culinary diversity, or attend sessions on how to plan balanced dinner menus, among other activities.

For practical advice on how to organise a **>> Canteen Day** and to get inspired by concrete examples, please refer to the Canteen Day Guide (also available in Italian) and the **>> Canteen Day Fact Sheet**.



SENSORY TESTS

Children are often reluctant to accept some healthy foods like vegetables due to their natural sensitivity to certain sensory characteristics, such as bitterness or chunkiness, which they tend to reject in favour of sweeter, softer options.

Scientific evidence indicates that **children's food acceptance is heavily influenced by four key sensory factors: appearance, taste, smell, and texture**. To make healthy school meal choices more acceptable and appealing to children, schools could use a sensory test, a scientifically robust tool that gathers valuable information to examine how sensory factors influence emotional reactions to food. **Using a sensory test could be useful for schools to better understand children's preferences and refine their meal offerings, ensuring that healthy and sustainable food choices are more widely accepted.**

To collect feedback, schools can administer a brief, visually engaging questionnaire straight after meals in the school canteen or cafeteria. Simple questions paired with emoticons make it easy for children to share their responses, providing valuable insights to guide menu improvements.

Examples of questions include:

HOW MUCH DO YOU LIKE OVERALL THE DISH?

Dislike extremely Dislike very much Dislike moderately Dislike slightly Neither like nor dislike Like slightly Like moderately Like very much Like extremely

HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU FINISHED TO EAT THE NEW DISH TODAY?
(CHOOSE AS MANY EMOJI AS YOU WANT!)

EXCITED SAD SHAKY IRRITATED NEUTRAL/INDIFFERENT HAPPY DISGUSTED PLEASED ANGRY

HOW MUCH FOOD IS LEFT ON YOUR PLATE?

Nothing Very little A little half A lot Everything

Appearance: How much do you like the colours of the ingredients? How much do you like the smell of the dish?

Taste: How well-balanced do you find the sweet, salty, bitter, and fatty flavours of the dish?

Texture: How much do you like the texture (e.g., crispy, hard, smooth) of the dish? How easy is it to eat this dish?

Overall Liking, Emotions, and Waste: How much do you like the dish overall? How do you feel after finishing the dish? How much food is left on your plate? Sensory feedback is not only useful for adjusting school menus but can also inform educational initiatives for families. Schools can share the results with caregivers, encouraging them to introduce similar healthy, sustainable dishes at home.

For practical advice on how to conduct a Sensory Test, please refer to the section titled "Sensory Evaluation and Acceptance" in Chapter 1, Subchapter 3 of the [School Menu Design Handbook](#)

4.2.4. GOOD PRACTICE FROM SCHOOLFOOD4CHANGE PARTNER CITIES

This section highlights examples of how the transition to Planetary Health Diets and Cooking have been implemented in schools across Europe.



TITLE: NAMING FOR LIKING AND LISTING INGREDIENTS

COUNTRY: SWEDEN

CITY: MALMÖ

SCHOOL: SEVERAL SCHOOLS



PILLAR OF THE WSFA:

FOOD & SUSTAINABILITY

DESCRIPTION:

Part of successful communication with students is giving them access to the menu for example, on the school's website, social media, or other platforms. It is also welcoming to greet them in the school restaurant with a "Lunch of the Day" sign, for instance. Even while serving, dishes can be presented with signs that display an enticing name and, ideally, the ingredients. Students really appreciate this transparency.

Instead of labeling a meal as "the vegetarian choice of the day" or something similar, the municipality of Umeå has chosen to present each school lunch as "Daily 1" and "Daily 2." The vegetarian meal is always listed as the first option ("Daily 1") both in the lunch app and on the menus, visible to pupils and caregivers alike. The Daily 1 choice is also always placed first in the serving line. When Umeå first implemented these changes, they noticed that more students began to choose the green meal from the menu.



WHO DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED THE ACTION?



COOKS

TO WHOM WAS THIS ACTION ADDRESSED?



PUPILS



PARENTS

TITLE: TRAIN THE TRAINER WORKSHOP FOR LEISURE TIME PEDAGOGUES

COUNTRY: AUSTRIA
CITY: VIENNA



PILLAR D: COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIP

DESCRIPTION:

In the train-the-trainer workshop, leisure time pedagogues get to know practical material that they can implement directly with the pupils.

The leisure time pedagogues have direct access to pupils and also accompany them at mealtimes. So their behaviour can have a strong positive influence on the students. We carry out a **tasting with the leisure time pedagogues, which they can implement one-to-one with the pupils.**

In this practical material, pupils learn to **recognize and distinguish between seasonal and regional types of fruit and vegetables and determine their origin.** They also get to know new varieties native to Austria by tasting a wide range of processing options for different types of fruit and vegetables - fresh, dried, and processed. The shapes and consistencies also differ, from soft to firm. By using a seasonal calendar, they learn which types of fruit and vegetables are harvested and stored at which times of the year in their region. Finally, the participants reflect on the benefits of a seasonal diet for both people and nature.



TITLE: HANDS IN THE TANGERINE FLOUR

COUNTRY: SPAIN

CITY: ZARAGOZA

SCHOOL: E.I. LOS VIENTOS



PILLAR C:

EDUCATION & LEARNING

DESCRIPTION:

In Zaragoza, 'E.I. Los Vientos' school is using tangerine flower flour as a continuous, sensory, and aromatic material in their classrooms. This playful, engaging resource offers a rich sensory experience through manipulation and aroma, enhancing learning and exploration.

1 - Sensory Play: Tangerine flour is used in 'experimentation trays', providing a unique opportunity for sensory play and experimentation.

2 - Recycling and Collaboration: The tangerine flour is made from recycled tangerine peels collected from school and home. This resource not only highlights the importance of sustainability and family involvement, but is also a great way to reduce food waste and loss.

3 - Simple Process: The peels are dried near a heat source and then crushed to create the desired texture.



REFERENCES:

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[» youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

4.2.5. GOOD PRACTICE FROM SCHOOLFOOD4CHANGE REPLICATION CITIES

This section presents examples of how SF4C Replication Cities plan to implement the transition to Planetary Health Diets and cooking in schools, inspired by interventions carried out in the SF4C Partner Cities.



TITLE: INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY COOKING

COUNTRY: ROMANIA

CITY: BRASOV



DESCRIPTION:

In the city of Brasov (Romania), food education initiatives are built around intergenerational exchange and the rediscovery of traditional cooking. Community cooking sessions will bring together seniors, including residents of care homes, with young people to prepare sustainable recipes and share stories. These cooking labs will be organised annually, starting with pilot schools in neighbourhoods such as Noua and Bartolomeu Nord. Alongside these activities, Brasov plans to expand its >> **Kitchen Adventure** project, encouraging families to return to home cooking with a focus on fun, health, and sustainability. From 2026 or 2027, the programme will provide schools and families with online resources to further support everyday cooking.

TITLE: MORE VEGGIE, LESS CO2!

COUNTRY: ITALY

CITY: CUNEO



DESCRIPTION:

Cuneo (Italy) has prioritised a shift towards more plant-based eating under the banner "More veggie, less CO₂!". The city aims to increase the shares of legumes and vegetables while reducing animal proteins in school meals, and serve whole grain products more regularly. A particularly promising step has been the introduction of vegetables at the start of meals in kindergartens. This simple change has led to children eating more vegetables, as they have more appetite at the beginning of the meal, before filling up on pasta or rice. Following positive results, the approach is expected to be expanded to more schools, supported by collaboration with cafeteria/canteen committees, schools, and local health authorities.

TITLE: MEDITERRANEAN-INSPIRED VEGETARIAN MENU DEVELOPMENT

COUNTRY: PORTUGAL

CITY: TORRES VEDRAS



DESCRIPTION:

The city of Torres Vedras (Portugal) is striving to make vegetarian menu options aligned with the Mediterranean diet more prominent. The city is developing diverse and appealing vegetarian meals, tailored to the preferences of secondary school-children. Nutritionists, school cooks, caregivers' associations, and local farmers are working together to create and test new recipes while adapting procurement processes to source suitable ingredients. Once political approval is secured, the plan is to introduce these options more broadly, ensuring vegetarian meals are both nutritious and appealing to children.





4.3. Innovative, Sustainable and Healthy Public Food Procurement

4.3.1. What is it?

SF4C's third pillar focuses on **procuring healthy and sustainable food (or catering services) for school meals**. Public food procurement holds great potential in driving transformative change, not only in schools but also in the broader food system. Beyond improving meal quality, investing in sustainable and healthy school food allows to simultaneously support food and nutrition security, to promote social equity, planetary health, biodiversity conservation (healthier soils), and to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

4.3.2. Who does it benefit?

The sustainable and healthy public food procurement guidelines developed in SF4C are designed for local and regional authorities and schools involved in the procurement process, who have the capacity to determine the products or services they want to purchase. While cost is an important factor in selecting providers, it is central for public authorities to also account for health impacts and sustainability criteria when preparing tenders and awarding contracts. SF4C aims to redirect the focus from purely financial considerations to those that also prioritise the sustainability and health of food in schools, ultimately benefiting both future generations and the planet.

4.3.3. How should it be implemented?

Aligned with the EU's public procurement legislation, **SF4C has developed targets and criteria to guide those responsible for direct food purchases and contracting catering services**. The criteria are designed to be flexible, serving as guidance rather than strict directives. Implementation will depend on existing targets and the specific context of each public authority (municipality, provincial government, etc.) and its markets.

TARGETS

Below are the seven targets identified by SF4C as critical to integrate in school food procurement tenders:

TARGET #1. Organic Production and Biodiversity Protection

At least 40% (by mass/volume, value or both) of the food and drink products provided should come from certified organic sources.

TARGET #2 Nutrition, Quality, Taste, Freshness and Seasonality

100% of the food provided under contract should be traceable to its origin and tested for quality and taste prior to being served. Fresh and seasonal products should be provided wherever possible, taking account cost, sustainability, nutritional value and food waste.

TARGET #3 GHG Emissions Reduction

The greenhouse gas emissions associated with the production, transportation, consumption and disposal of food should be measured and progressively reduced.

TARGET #4 Reduction of Food Poverty and Inequality

All schoolchildren should be given access to healthy food and surplus food should be redistributed to disadvantaged communities in socially acceptable ways.

TARGET #5 Food Education, Food Culture, Culinary Traditions

Food education should be integrated in school meals, in particular through activities that focus on healthy eating as a learning experience involving the active participation of schoolchildren and teachers, and the wider school community.

TARGET #6 Small Farmers and Social Integration of Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Groups

At least 10% of food provided under contracts should come from small farmers¹ or organisations employing disabled or disadvantaged workers. To achieve this target, contracting authorities shall organise pre-procurement market engagement actions as listed below.

TARGET #7 Fair Trade and Decent Labour Conditions

At least 50% of coffee, tea, sugar and exotic fruits provided under contracts should originate from suppliers certified as Fair Trade including labels such as FairTrade, Ecocert Fair Trade, Fair for Life, or equivalent.

¹ Those with a turnover up to 100,000 EUR, a maximum agricultural area as defined by the concerned EU Member State for small-scale farmers and type of agriculture, and up to 5 employees beyond family members.

PROCUREMENT CRITERIA

For each Target, specific criteria should be included in tenders for food and/or catering services.

The criteria defined by SF4C are organised into:

- **Levels of ambition:** Core Criteria, that establish a baseline for health and sustainability, providing a foundational standard for sustainable public food procurement; and Advanced Criteria, intended for public authorities seeking to exceed the basic standards of health and sustainability, encouraging service providers to offer even more sustainable solutions.
- **Steps of the procurement process:** Selection Criteria (SC), Technical Specifications (TS), Award Criteria (AC), Contract Performance Clauses (CPC).
- **Type of procurement:** direct food procurement (labelled with 🍏); procurement of catering services (labelled with 🍽️).

EXAMPLE OF PROCUREMENT CRITERIA

TARGET CRITERIA #1. Organic Production and Biodiversity Protection

■ Level: Core

Step of the procurement process: Technical Specification (TS)

Type: Applying to both direct procurement and catering service 🍏🍽️

🍏🍽️ TS for organic share of food products: At least 40% of the total [mass/volume and/or value, to be specified by contracting authority] of food and drinks provided under the contract must be from certified organic sources, or from sources under conversion to organic standards.

Verification:

The supplier must declare that it will comply with this requirement as part of the tender and provide an indicative list of the food and drink items which will be provided with organic certification in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 2018/848. The expected [mass/volume and/or value] of these products to be provided under the contract must be indicated. Products which bear the EU Organic (green leaf) label or equivalent will be deemed to comply. Products originating from fields/farms/food production facilities in conversion to organic standards that demonstrate a plan of reaching organic food production within a specific time frame, which does not exceed the period of the contract, may also be deemed to comply, if evidence of this is provided.

■ **Level: Advanced**

Step of the procurement process: Technical Specification (TS)

Type: Applying direct procurement and catering service separately 🍏 🍴

🍏 TS for organic share of food products: 100% of the following fruits, vegetables and cereals [products to be specified], and 50% of meat and fish products [by mass and/or value, to be specified by contracting authority] products to be specified] and fish [products to be specified] supplied must be from certified organic sources.

🍴 TS for organic share of food products: 100% of the following fruits, vegetables and cereals [products to be specified], and 50% of meat and fish products [by mass and/or value, to be specified by contracting authority] products to be specified] and fish [products to be specified] supplied must be from certified organic sources.

Verification:

Suppliers must provide a list of food products [and/or an indication of their mass/volume or value], which will be provided under the contract that are certified as organic in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 2018/848.

For more information on the criteria set for each target and real-life examples, please refer to Chapter 4 of the

➤ **'Handbook for innovative and sustainable public procurement of healthy school meals'**

OPERATIONAL AND PROCUREMENT MODELS

When considering integrating more sustainability and health criteria into school food procurement processes and tenders, one of the first steps is to closely consider the **operational structure of school food provision** - that is, food preparation and provision models - and the **procurement model** or approach in place. These can vary widely between municipalities, across regions or countries, and even among individual schools within the same area.

In terms of **food preparation models**, schools can operate through on-site kitchens, where meals are cooked and served immediately or centralised kitchens, where meals are prepared by the municipality, regional government, or catering provider and then distributed to schools. In other cases, catering companies are responsible for preparing meals at their premises.

Provision models can also differ, ranging from in-house catering, where meals are both prepared and served on-site, and there is direct procurement of food as ingredients for cooking the meal rather than catering services, to contract catering, either through public or private companies. Some cases involve a combination of the two approaches.

Another difference can arise from the **procurement model** in place. The procurement can be centralised (organised by the municipality) or decentralised (handled by the schools themselves) or a mixed approach.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD PROCUREMENT FOR CITIES

The table below provides a comprehensive overview of the key actions that cities can undertake to implement sustainable food procurement. Depending on the specific set up of each municipality or school, and the political context at diverse governmental levels (that is, local, regional, national level), and the market readiness and availability (that is, supply, particularly local or regional) different pathways and degrees of ambition in terms of sustainable food procurement can be pursued.

In the case of public procurement, there are no tailored recommendations for schools as the scope of action may vary significantly depending on the country's regulations, on the operational model in place and on the size of the school (resources).

What the city should prepare for:

| Actions | Tips |
|--|--|
| <p>Explore the most relevant opportunities based on the procurement and provisional model you have in place.</p> | <p>Not all the proposed actions may work in your context, as they will depend on the procurement model in your city. To get started, the following questions can help provide an understanding of where you stand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How many tenders are you planning?• Who is in charge of planning the tenders?• What type of procurement do you conduct (direct food purchasing or catering services)? What institution is the tender intended for?• What is the contract duration? |
| <p>Assess your political and legal framework and identify potential enabling factors.</p> | <p>Fundamental factors to foster sustainable food procurement are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wide accessibility to knowledge infrastructure that facilitate best practice exchanges (e.g. P2P learning and capacity building activities);• Political commitment towards sustainable food systems such as a local (city) food strategy (e.g. Ghent, Copenhagen). |
| <p>Understand the market needs and challenges.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market dialogues in the pre-tender phase are useful to identify potential suppliers and relevant products or services available on the market. On the other hand, they also provide an opportunity for suppliers – particularly small scale producers - to present their products and prepare for the upcoming tender process. For example, smallscale farmers can learn how to apply for a tender.• If you want to host a market dialogue, the ideal timeline is three to six months prior to tendering. <p>For further information, please refer to the >> Short guidance for market engagement and stakeholder dialogue.</p> |

Update the criteria and objectives into your food and catering tenders.

- Refer to the guidelines presented in paragraph 5.3.3.

SCHOOL GAME: ROLE PLAY FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN ON PUBLIC FOOD PROCUREMENT

As part of SF4C, a role-play type of game was developed with the aim of **raising children's awareness of the stakeholders and dynamics behind school food procurement**. The game brings together multiple aspects of SF4C and builds on the observation that food and nutrition education is essential to help children make more informed choices about their diets and understand the health and sustainability impact of those choices.

The game's rules are summarised as follows:

1. Split schoolchildren into groups, each representing a different stakeholder group among small farmers, teachers, schoolchildren, caregivers, caterers, health public department (doctors), municipal purchasing office.
2. Provide each group with a card stating who they represent, what is their main interest and goal to pursue.
3. Let the groups negotiate and discuss among themselves to find deals.
4. Every agreement is worth one point. The group that gets the highest score wins.

Example of a card:



SMALL FARMERS

Who are you?

You are a family of farmers, you have a farm. You and companies like yours produce fruit, vegetables and cereals. You produce quality food and respect local traditions. You take care of the land and diversify production, protecting the landscape and biodiversity

What do you want?

You want your children at school to be able to eat the food you produce locally, respecting the seasons and traditions. But it is difficult to sell your products to the school because you cannot guarantee the quantities required and the price required is too low.

4.3.4. GOOD PRACTICE FROM SCHOOLFOOD4CHANGE PARTNER CITIES

This section features examples of how Innovative, Sustainable and Healthy Public Food Procurement was implemented across several SF4C cities in Europe, reflecting diverse local contexts.



TITLE: SUSTAINABLE FOOD PROCUREMENT IN MALMÖ

COUNTRY: SWEDEN
CITY: MALMÖ



PILLAR OF THE WSFA: FOOD & SUSTAINABILITY

DESCRIPTION:

The City of Malmö oversees nearly **60,000 school lunches daily**, with most meals prepared onsite (14,000 in kindergartens, 38,000 in primary schools, and 7,000 in high schools), just a small amount cooked in large kitchens facilities and transported to schools in heated containers.

Malmö has strengthened collaborations with the food sector through some key activities:

- **Market dialogues** for 4 food group tenders (fresh meat and game; poultry and game; fresh fruit, vegetables and eggs; whole and baked goods) to increase supplier interest in procurement.
- **A food procurement fair**, to promote collaboration among local food producers.
- **A new dynamic purchasing system** for local small and medium scale food producers to bid on the procurement processes.

Furthermore, through **cost-effective procurement**, over the last decades Malmö has **increased organic school food by 46%** and **reduced the carbon footprint of school meals by 30%**, earning top honors in Sweden for years 2021 and 2022.



| Institution/ Categories | % Organic | % Local | % Fairtrade | % MSC-labelling | CO ₂ e kg/food |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Kindergartens | 69 | 64 | 11 | 77 | 1,5 |
| Primary Schools | 76 | 66 | 1,5 | 85 | 1,3 |
| Secondary Schools | 71 | 63 | 1,6 | 84 | 1,4 |

Key figures for the SF4C project period 2022 to July 2024

TITLE: SUSTAINABLE FOOD PROCUREMENT IN TALLINN

COUNTRY: ESTONIA
CITY: TALLINN



PILLAR OF THE WSFA

FOOD & SUSTAINABILITY

DESCRIPTION:

In Tallinn, school meals are served in **58 general education schools and 125 pre-schools**, with most meals prepared onsite. Schools manage their own procurement processes, while the city sets requirements and oversees the publication of tenders.

In the 2023-2024 school year, Tallinn introduced new **criteria for environmentally sustainable school catering**:

- **Eco-Label requirement.** All catering services must obtain an eco-label, ensuring that at least 20% of raw materials are organic.
- **Monitoring compliance.** External audits were introduced as a new practice, with surveys assessing schools adherence to the criteria, focusing on organic sourcing and service quality.

An external audit conducted during the same year allowed Tallinn to identify **challenges** that need to be tackled across some schools. These include:

- **Failure to meet technical requirements:** Some schools struggled with offering a diverse variety of foods while meeting nutritional standards.
- **Canteen cleanliness:** Issues with cleanliness threatened health standards compliance and the overall quality of the dining environment.

To drive further improvements, the City plans to **strengthen monitoring** in schools facing these issues and continue **conducting audits** to support the implementation of **corrective actions**.



TITLE: SUSTAINABLE FOOD PROCUREMENT IN NUORO

COUNTRY: ITALY
CITY: NUORO



PILLAR OF THE WSFA

FOOD & SUSTAINABILITY

DESCRIPTION:

The City of Nuoro oversees school meal services for **21 schools**, serving **2,467 pupils**. Of these, 18 schools offer meals prepared internally (10 schools) or shipped from external kitchens (8 schools), while 12 nursery canteens prepare meals on-site.

The City of Nuoro organised a **market dialogue event with 25 local stakeholders**, including catering companies and city representatives, to better inform the development of the new school food tender.

Key features include the **adoption of new Minimum Environmental Criteria (CAM)** for green public procurement, a **minimum of 50% organic and local food**, the introduction of **food waste monitoring**, and the **training of cooks**.

Thanks to the remarkably high adoption rates of organic and local products, Nuoro won the **Green Canteen Award in 2024**.



Categories

%

Dairy products

90% organic 10% local

Olive Oil

100% organic & local

Tomato sauce & tomatoes

100% organic & local

Vegetables, fruits, cereals

70% organic 30% local

Beef meat

60% organic 40% local

Pork meat

20% organic 80% local

Poultry

100% organic & free range

TITLE: EMBEDDING FOOD WASTE CRITERIA INTO PROCUREMENT TENDERS

COUNTRY: GERMANY

CITY: BREMEN



DESCRIPTION:

In Bremen (Germany), the approval of the new city's procurement guidelines will mark an important step towards embedding sustainability into public catering. **The proposed regulation aims to introduce mandatory criteria for all state and communal authorities, requiring them to adopt monitoring systems and food waste reduction strategies when awarding catering contracts.** For the first time, food waste prevention will be integrated into the official tendering process, making it a clear requirement for service providers. These requirements will build on existing rules that already prioritise plant based dishes and provide that any meat served must be organic. The approach is designed to influence a wide range of stakeholders, from administrative professionals with purchasing responsibilities to event organisers and catering companies, ensuring that sustainable practices become a norm across the city.

TITLE: MARKET DIALOGUES TO FOSTER LOCAL AND ORGANIC SCHOOL MEALS

COUNTRY: FINLAND

CITY: SEINÄJOKI



DESCRIPTION:

Seinäjoki (Finland) has set out a clear vision for transforming its school food system by 2030. The city's goal is that at least half of all ingredients used in school meals will be organic or locally sourced, supporting both environmental targets and regional farming communities. The broader ambition is to provide meals that are nutritious, sustainable, and culturally appropriate for all primary and secondary schoolchildren. To reach this target, **Seinäjoki is organising pre-procurement market dialogues and workshops with local farmers, caterers, and other suppliers.** These events aim to explain new sustainability requirements, gather feedback, and help suppliers adapt to future tenders. The initiative will begin with a group of five to ten pilot schools before gradually expanding across the city.

5. IN A NUTSHELL:

KEY STEPS TO PUT YOUR SCHOOL FOOD VISION INTO ACTION

In this section, you will find practical steps and tips to help you plan and implement actions from SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) in your city and context. These aim to support you in assessing your school food system, shaping a long-term vision, and identifying priority actions and key stakeholders to involve in the planning process. Let's get started!

STEP 1

ANALYSE YOUR CONTEXT AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOU OPERATE

Each city operates within a unique policy context, which can result in varying levels of advancement and integration of food systems into broader city policies and strategies. Before planning any actions, an important step is to assess your overall policy environment and legal framework (including at regional, national and EU levels). At the local or city level, this also means assessing how food systems are embedded in the city's governance and policies, and how school food policies are integrated into the broader food system agenda and identify the main stakeholders within your local school food system.

Tip: You can start by reviewing existing policies at local, regional, national, and EU level. You may also want to review the types of food preparation and provision models in place, and the procurement approaches used in your city's schools. Another aspect you may want to observe is the quality of relationship and communication established with your school food system's stakeholders (e.g. between city and school staff).

STEP 2

ENVISION YOUR IDEAL SCHOOL FOOD SYSTEM

To create your vision, start by writing a short description of your ideal school food system in the long term. You may choose a target year and imagine what your system will look like then. Consider practical changes (such as food provided, eating spaces and equipment, and human and financial resources), relational changes (like stronger cooperation or higher engagement of stakeholders), and other relevant improvements that could make your school food system stronger and more sustainable.

To keep your vision realistic and grounded, you can use the SF4C pillars as a guide to identify areas for improvement, while also including areas you are already working on or new ones you wish to develop.

Tip: In your vision, describe the achievements you would like to see and explain why they matter. This helps make your vision more concrete and meaningful.

Example: By Year X, all children in city-run schools have access to healthier, locally sourced meals, supporting their well-being and learning; schools work with small farmers (for educational and food supply purposes), supporting the local food economy; at least 30% of school food comes from organic and regional agriculture, promoting sustainable food production practices and healthier diets.



STEP 3

DEFINE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS.

WHICH STEPS WILL MOVE YOU FROM THE STATUS QUO TOWARD YOUR VISION?

Based on your vision and the current state of your school food system – including the opportunities and challenges you identified – list at least three specific priorities or actions to implement. For each priority, specify the target school(s) and the stakeholders who should be involved to coordinate or support implementation, as well as some potential milestones and the steps needed to achieve the final outcome.

Tip: You can take inspiration from the [»» SF4C Replication Plans](#) developed by the SF4C Replication Cities when outlining your priorities. If your school food policy is in its early stages, focus on the most pressing priorities rather than trying to replicate all the steps of SF4C cities.

With these steps at hand, you should be able to start turning your vision into action for healthier and more sustainable school meals in your city!

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This Replication Guidance has been produced in 2025 as part of the Horizon 2020 funded project SchoolFood4Change (grant agreement No. 101036763), within Work Package 6 “Outreach, Replication and International Cooperation” led by ICLEI Europe.

About the project SchoolFood4Change

SchoolFood4Change is an EU-funded project running from January 2022 to June 2026, aiming to make school meals tasty, enjoyable, educational and healthy for both people and the planet. It involves children, young people, parents, school staff, canteen managers, cities, policy makers, researchers and experts to turn schools and canteens into places where nutritious, sustainable food is served. Working with partner cities, the project promotes knowledge sharing, participation and educational activities in schools to strengthen young people’s understanding of healthy eating and empower them to advocate for sustainable food habits in their communities. In this way, the project has already impacted more than one million children. More than 1,400 cooks and kitchen heroes have been trained to help children learn better and grow every day. And more than 3,000 schools are already serving healthier meals across Europe. [»» Watch this video to find out more!](#)

About ICLEI and ICLEI’s global CityFood Programme

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network working with more than 2500+ local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 125+ countries, we influence sustainability policy and drive local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development.

Since 2013, ICLEI’s global [»» CityFood Programme](#) supports local and regional action for sustainable food systems to leverage the transformative power of food to build resilience.

Lead authors

- Angèle Tasse (formerly ICLEI Europe)
- Beatrice Ruggiero (ICLEI Europe)

Quality review

- Amalia Ochoa (ICLEI Europe)
- Vivien Frank (ICLEI Europe)

Design

- Studio Cosmo
- Dorina Meyer (ICLEI Europe)

Contributions

The development of this Guidance was coordinated by ICLEI Europe (ICLEI ES) and benefited from contributions from SchoolFood4Change partners on specific areas of the SchoolFood4Change Triple Approach, in particular from: Annelies Smets and Femke Van Vaerenbergh, Rikolto Belgium (Whole School Food Approach); Nadia Tecco and Matteo Bigi, University of Gastronomic Sciences (Planetary Health Diets & Cooking); and Monika Rut and Vivien Frank, ICLEI European Secretariat (Innovative, Healthy, Sustainable Food Procurement).

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info@schoolfood4change.eu
www.schoolfood4change.eu
#SchoolFood4Change



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