



Copenhagen (Denmark)

667,099 inhabitants



Organic production + biodiversity protection

Small farmers + social integration of disadvantaged groups

GHG emission reduction

Nutrition, quality, taste, freshness, seasonality

Engaging with the Market for Better Tenders

What? To purchase food of good quality for kitchens operated by the City of Copenhagen.

When? 2025 (duration: 4 years)

Who? For kitchens in schools, elderly homes and other institutions for people in vulnerable situations.

"By being ambitious, staying in dialogue with suppliers and adjusting our requirements where needed, we found workable solutions."

The challenge?

In Copenhagen, the challenge at hand is to reconcile sustainability goals in food procurement with market conditions and what can be delivered. Their large municipal food system, including city-managed kitchens, should support both climate goals and healthy diets, in line with the [Danish Dietary Guidelines](#), tackling food waste while offering plant-based food.

The solution!

To address all these challenges, Copenhagen set clear and ambitious requirements in their public food tenders. Market dialogues between an internal working group of the city and market participants were held at an early stage. Requirements were adjusted to the market and then included in the tender.

The results:

By demanding high packaging, vehicle, and quality standards, the city included award criteria for seasonal, fairtrade, and eco-labelled products. This process led to 90% green delivery vehicles and over 150 seasonal product varieties, widening the climate-friendly options for municipal kitchens. Flexible ordering also allows switching stock items to order-on-demand to minimise supplier food waste.

- **Economic impact:** Supports suppliers and local kitchens by offering flexible ordering terms that protect resources and reduce financial losses across the value chain.
- **Social impact (SROI):** Encourages suppliers to offer internships and job opportunities to people in search of employment through contract performance agreements.
- **Environmental impact:** Lowers the carbon footprint of meals while requiring suppliers to actively minimise food waste and use green vehicles for deliveries.



Key Takeaways for Cities:

Clear sustainability goals give suppliers direction, while tender requirements turn those goals into real impact.



Combine high standards for quality and green transport with flexibility, like on-demand delivery to prevent supplier food waste.

Talk to the market early to understand what is realistic. Work closely with your own kitchens, so they are ready to buy and use more sustainable products. Regular dialogue helps solve practical challenges and reduce complexity.

