



# Leuven (Belgium)

104,189 inhabitants



💡 Raised awareness on systemic change

🍎 Nutrition, quality, taste, freshness, seasonality

🧑‍🌾 Small farmers + social integration of disadvantaged groups

## Connecting Schools and Suppliers for Sustainable Food

**What?** To promote more healthy and sustainable school food, Leuven worked to improve understanding for healthy food offers in schools through engagement with suppliers and caterers across the city.

**When?** 2025 - ongoing

**Who?** Schools, school food suppliers and caterers.

*"Staying close to schools helps motivate them to think about their tender"*

### The challenge?

SF4C is implemented by Leuven's Education Department. Since food procurement decisions are made by individual schools rather than the city, the challenge was to understand existing food provision networks and identify support needs for schools to integrate sustainability criteria into their purchasing decisions, moving beyond education for real change.

### The solution!

Leuven identified three solutions through close local collaboration. School food provision, procurement practices, and school criteria were mapped to help schools select caterers and suppliers. The City's Education Department organised a market dialogue to discuss needs, barriers, and sustainability criteria and developed a public list of screened school procurement providers.

### The results:

Leuven's mapping exercise and market dialogue provided valuable insights into school food provision, procurement practices bringing schools and suppliers together to exchange perspectives, align expectations, and build a shared vision.

While schools are not required to use the public list that emerged from the market dialogues, it will nonetheless serve as a trusted guide for procurement decisions.

- **Economic impact:** Leuven launched an open call for suppliers and caterers, developing a public provider list that meets city and school criteria to guide future purchasing decisions.
- **Social impact:** Strengthened collaboration by helping schools explain their needs while giving suppliers a voice to provide feedback on feasibility.
- **Environmental impact:** Sends a clear signal to the market regarding the specific sustainability standards the city seeks to promote.



Photo by Marek Lumiton / Unsplash

### Key Takeaways for Cities:

#### This is a replicable roadmap!

Engage schools, invite the market to co-create solutions, and make your values visible in procurement. It's about shifting from fragmented decisions to collective impact.



**Small steps count, even if there is no immediate impact/ change show.**

**Reach out to other city departments:** Through collaboration you can inspire and get inspired by your colleagues. Obstacles start to turn into possibilities.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101036763.