



Valencia (Spain)

5.27 million inhabitants



Organic production + biodiversity protection

GHG emission reduction

Nutrition, quality, taste, freshness, seasonality

Food education, food culture, + culinary traditions

Market Dialogues in Valencia Region for Better School Meals

What? To bring healthy, sustainable food into public institutions, including schools, while supporting local producers and regional food systems.

When? 2023 - 2024

Who? Schools!

“Embedding sustainability criteria into public procurement lays the foundation for healthier, more equitable school food.”

The challenge?

In Valencia region, traditional procurement models were often rigid, distant from local realities, and difficult for small suppliers. Workshops revealed barriers like unfamiliarity with tendering rules and a mismatch between product availability and procurement specifications. These dialogues highlighted differing priorities for cost efficiency and a need for flexibility.

The solution!

Through SchoolFood4Change, Valencia pioneered a market dialogue uniting local farmers, canteen operators, and procurement officials. This dialogue built mutual understanding, mapped food flows, and identified shared priorities for future buying. Consequently the Region is moving towards a dynamic system that better accommodates seasonal, organic, and local produce.

The results:

Zaragoza has developed a framework for food service contracts grounded in sustainability, health, and social equity, now implemented in the city's kindergartens. Contracts prioritise fresh, seasonal, and organic food, support smaller producers, and include practical tools, training and market consultations.

The participatory process also established a Working Group on Health and Sustainable Food Procurement within Zaragoza's Municipal Food Council, bringing together civil society, universities, producers, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders. By Segmenting contracts and providing technical support, Zaragoza is improving market access while making its sustainability goals more achievable.

- **Economic impact:** Contract segmentation and support for shorter supply chains improve access to public procurement for SMEs and local producers.
- **Social impact (SROI):** The approach strengthens participation and transparency while supporting healthier and more equitable access to nutritious meals.
- **Environmental impact:** More seasonal and organic products and stronger food waste prevention measures contribute to lower environmental impacts and more sustainable food systems.



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Key Takeaways for Cities:

Bring all key stakeholders together—including producers, caterers, schools, and legal experts—to identify barriers and co-create practical solutions.

Involve legal and financial teams early to align procurement plans with administrative and budget requirements.

Make tenders accessible to smaller suppliers by using geographical or product-based lots, framework agreements, or rotating supplier pools.



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