



Zaragoza (Spain)

736,600 inhabitants



Participatory Process for Strategic Public Procurement

What? To involve civil society, public administration, and food sector stakeholders in shaping strategic public food procurement, with the goal of ensuring that 50% of Zaragoza's food contracts include healthy and sustainable food criteria by 2026.

When? 2023 - ongoing

Who? Municipal kindergartens

"Strategic food procurement isn't just about meals. It's about resilience justice, and sustainability."

The challenge?

Faced with growing environmental challenges, social inequalities, and unhealthy diets, Zaragoza recognised that traditional food contracts were missing opportunities to create wider impact. The city also faced limited technical support, a concentrated supplier market, and insufficient resources to define and monitor sustainable contracts.

The solution!

Zaragoza launched a participatory process to rethink food procurement in public institutions. Led by the municipal departments of Public Health and Environment, and supported by Mensa Cívica and CERAI, it brought together more than 20 civil society organisations to co-design a new approach to public procurement.

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.



Photo by [David Vives](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Key Takeaways for Cities:

Build Alliances Early: Engage civil society, professionals, and market actors early to ensure buy-in and realism.

Start with What's Feasible: Use pilot contracts and flexible criteria—perfection isn't the goal; scalable impact is.

Train and Support Staff: Invest in capacity-building for procurement teams to implement and monitor strategic contracts effectively.

