



# Good Food in Public Canteens Across Europe

At Buy Better Food, we want every public canteen in Europe to serve food which supports good health, good farming, **and tackling** the climate emergency. We know it can be done, and these inspiring stories from across Europe show how. Now we need the European Commission to make sure all canteens serve good food, find out more at

[buybetterfood.eu](http://buybetterfood.eu)

## Oslo – Fair Trade

Food and ingredients obtained from long and complex value chains can occasionally be linked to unjust trading practices, child labour or workers' exploitation. The municipality of Oslo (Norway) has taken significant steps to enhance fairness from the production side. Through a competitive procedure with negotiation, the city was able to **increase the share of fairly traded bananas from 3% to 50% and of coffee from 9% to 13%**. Oslo is also a Fairtrade-city. A Steering Committee, which includes members from the municipality, business entities, and NGOs, has been **formed** to actively advance the cause of fair trade.

## Copenhagen – Reaching 90% organic

The city of Copenhagen (Denmark) serves as a successful example of transitioning public canteens to organic food without incurring additional expenses. Despite a modest initial investment for planning and education, costs have not increased. This achievement is attributed to measures such as **minimising food waste, sourcing seasonal ingredients, embracing a more plant-based menus, and reducing meat consumption**. As a result, the city reached a staggering **90% of organically produced food for its public canteens** offering more flavourful, healthier, and environmentally friendly meals.

## Ghent – Veggie Thursday

A single day each week can yield remarkable results. Ghent (Belgium) exemplifies this with its Veggie Thursday initiative. Recognising the substantial climate impacts of meat consumption, the city took action in **2009** by starting **Thursday Veggie Day**. This means that every Thursday, public canteens exclusively offer vegetarian meals, and restaurants and private citizens are encouraged to follow suit. Since then, Ghent has **significantly lessened its climate footprint** and served as an **inspiration for numerous other cities** such as Sao Paulo (Brazil), Bremen (Germany), San Francisco (United States of America) and Cape-Town (South Africa) to adopt similar practices.

## Freiburg – Going vegetarian in schools

Going the extra mile, the city of Freiburg in Germany, already known as one of the country's most sustainable cities, is set to **remove meat from the menus** of its kindergartens and primary schools beginning in 2024. This move is expected to **significantly cut costs and increase the proportion of organic food from 20% to 40%**. This approach will lower the environmental footprint of school meals and promote healthier and organic options in the canteens.

## Torres Vedras – Food education

Healthy food and food education stand as a pivotal tool in cultivating healthier, equitable, and ecologically balanced food systems. In Torres Vedras (Portugal) this belief manifests in the city's approach to school meals. Beyond the **fresh, seasonal and traditional ingredients used to prepare dishes**, the city mandates **local farm visits, culinary and horticultural classes**, as well as **lessons on healthy dietary habits** for students. This comprehensive strategy **elevates children's appreciation for school food** and instills wholesome eating practices that extend to families and a more wholesome food culture.

## Orduña – Regional Agroecological Farming

Public food procurement is a crucial part of revitalising regional economic development. In Orduña (Spain), the entire **region has adopted an agroecological development model**; leveraging public procurement to ensure **dignified working conditions, fair prices, and sustainable agriculture**. By dividing the tender into lots, dialoguing with the farmers, and setting up agroecological criteria, the municipality procured **short supply chain organic food to support local economic development**.

## Dordogne – Animal welfare

Public canteens hold substantial sway in enhancing animal welfare standards. In Dordogne (France), **school canteen tenders incorporate clear standards and award criteria** to providers that provide **nose to tail training to cooking staff** to help them use, at best, all parts of the animal in their dishes. This system ensures that **animal rearing respects tighter animal welfare criteria** while reducing the number of animals necessary to be slaughtered for the same amount of protein.

## Växjö – Dynamic Purchasing System

Public canteens hold significant potential for benefiting local economies through supporting small-scale food producers. Växjö (Sweden) has embraced the **Dynamic Purchasing System** as a strategy to involve these smaller producers in tender processes. This approach enables them to frequently bid on **smaller quantities for specific products**. Presently, this system applies to **10% of fruit and vegetables and 15% of meat supplies**. However, the overarching objective is to steadily augment these percentages over time.

## Pļaviņu – Food Waste Reduction

Minimizing food wastage constitutes a significant stride in curbing the environmental impacts of public meals. Starting in 2018, Pļaviņu (Latvia) has revolutionized its approach to school food. Prior to the updated contract, projections indicated a daily food wastage of 10 kg per school, the equivalent of 3.5kg a year per child. The novel tender approach, encompassing **food education** for students, **menu adjustments**, and **portion flexibility**, has resulted in an **impressive reduction of up to 50% in food waste** within canteens.

## Vienna – A long organic tradition

In 1998, the City of Vienna (Austria) established their Green Procurement Programme to promote climate and environmental protection. Experts work together to develop legally binding criteria for procurement, and an advisory committee for legal affairs evaluates the legal validity. There is a minimum of **30% organic food served in local hospitals** and retirement homes, and at least **50% organic food in schools and kindergartens**. Only **free-range or organic eggs** are purchased and **milk is 100% organic**.

## Bergamo – Sweet Free Dreams

Public food procurement can serve as a means to **promote solidarity and inclusiveness**. In Bergamo (Italy) the local municipality has taken a step towards this by partnering with a local cooperative (Cooperativa Sociale Calimero) within their tender process. This collaboration involves providing schools with **freshly baked bread prepared by inmates** through the Sweet Free Dreams project. This initiative has shown to aid inmate reintegration by **fostering self-esteem, self-confidence, and social engagement**.

## Acquaviva Delle Fonti – Fighting gangmaster

A sustainable food system upholds both environmental integrity and human welfare. To address **migrant exploitation and gangmaster practice issues**, the municipality of Acquaviva Delle Fonti (Italy) has proactively used **public procurement criteria** that recognise and supporting **businesses and SMEs listed on the official white list** (Rete del Lavoro Agricolo di Qualità). This list assures **food production adheres to ethical labour practices** and is **free from exploitation**. This decision has yielded positive results encouraging other local municipalities in the region to adopt similar approaches.

## Fano – Diversity for health

The essence of healthy food lies in **diversity**, a principle that the school canteens of Fano (Italy) embody exceptionally well. Through the strategic **diversification of ingredients and dishes**, schools offer delicious and **nutritious options**. Traditional rice, wholemeal pasta, and bread have taken the place of white bread and plain pasta, while **pulses and legumes have replaced some processed foods and red meat**. New vegetables such as pumpkin, cauliflower, and cabbage have expanded the previously limited selection of salads and carrots, enhancing both variety and preparation methods.

- Cities practicing sustainable public food procurement.
- Cities endorsing the Manifesto.

**The Manifesto for Minimum Standards in Public Canteens across Europe is an EU Food Policy Coalition manifesto that advocates for the implementation of minimum criteria in public food procurement. Its aim is to guarantee the provision of nutritious and sustainable food in public canteens while contributing to the transition towards healthy, just, and climate-friendly food systems.**



### Healthy food

100% of all public meals are based on dietary guidelines that ensure sustainable, healthy nutrition for all relevant age groups and social contexts.



### Organic and other agro-ecological products

At least 20% of procured food is certified as organic, and marks are awarded for agro-ecological practices beyond the minimum organic requirement.



### Small-scale farmers' support

At least 10% of food originates from small-scale farmers, defined by turnover, agricultural area and number of employees



### Climate action

25% GHG emissions reduction through more plant-based food, food waste reduction and a low-carbon food chain from farm to fork.



### Fair Trade

At least 25% of the products typically originating from countries outside Europe, such as bananas, coffee and tea, shall be fairly traded.



### Animal welfare

A higher animal welfare standard in combination with higher plant-based food Content.



### Decent working conditions

100% compliance with decent working conditions in conformity with applicable collective bargaining agreements as well as relevant national, EU legislation and international standards, and encouraging the employment of vulnerable workers in the farm to fork food chain.

Scan to read the **Manifesto on Minimum Public Food Procurement Standards**

