

Letter to call for leveraging minimum mandatory criteria in Sustainable Food Procurement as a change-maker to foster a sustainable food system, and to include this in the Mission Letters.

Brussels, 6 September 2024

Dear Peter van Kemseke,

Cc: Wim Debeuckelaere

On behalf of the [Buy Better Food Campaign](#), a pan-European advocacy campaign promoting sustainable food procurement, we urge the European Commission to capitalise on the opportunity and lever **minimum criteria in Sustainable Food Procurement (SFP) as a change-maker to foster a sustainable food system.**

Considering:

- the objectives of the **EU Farm to Fork Strategy** to determine minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement, and the commitment to review the **EU School Scheme** on fruit, vegetables and food education in schools
- the **EU Child Guarantee** Council Recommendation to prevent and combat social exclusion and proposing at least one healthy meal each school day
- the announcement by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to review the **EU Public Procurement Directives**, and
- the announcement by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to present a **Vision for Agriculture and Food in the first 100 days** of her mandate.

We strongly advocate for an adequate reform of legislation governing public food procurement and the **inclusion of minimum mandatory criteria for SFP** in the upcoming Mission Letters to the relevant Commissioners.

Together with the [EU Food Policy Coalition](#), we have developed a [Manifesto for Establishing Minimum Criteria for Public Canteens across the EU](#). The Manifesto presents seven actionable legally-prooved procurement and verification criteria for cities, regions and public bodies to source sustainable food for schools, hospitals and public institutions. The effectiveness of these criteria is being [demonstrated daily by local and regional governments across Europe](#), as with their uptake by DG SANTE and the Joint Research Centre in their ongoing efforts to develop SFP criteria. The outlined criteria fixed as minimum standards offer a tangible roadmap to transform public food procurement, contributing to healthier communities, resilient small-scale farming, and a sustainable future for Europe.

With [90 million pupils and children](#) going back to school this month, the impact of establishing minimum standards for healthy school meals and food education would be enormous. As a recently released [study](#) shows, policy measures that promote healthy school meals have the potential of simultaneously addressing undernutrition, obesity and environmental sustainability. Therefore, this standard should - as advocated in the Manifesto - be coupled with others such as including small-scale farmers' in the tender, climate actions such as food waste reduction targets, higher animal welfare and of course full compliance with workers' rights.

There is nothing but **shared political consensus** that all children in Europe deserve access to healthy and nutritious meals. SPF is a powerful yet underutilised tool with the potential to drive the market demand for small-scale and organic farming products, and therefore support farmers who invest in higher animal welfare and environmental practices. As such, it can help to secure local jobs, have a positive impact on rural areas and the generational renewal of EU farming, as well as progressively influence patterns of food production and consumption and deliver immediate public health benefits.

The European Union should not only follow but also inspire what is happening internationally looking also at the United States where the vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz is considering expanding universal school meals, currently implemented in eight states, to the federal level.

Considering all of the above, we ask you to prioritise in the Mission Letters to the new Commissioners the establishment of minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement reinforcing the commitment from the Farm to Fork Strategy in the Vision for Food and Agriculture.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this further with you and remain at your disposal to provide any further information or support necessary on any of the above.

Kind regards,
Jean-Marc Louvin
Buy Better Food Coordinator