

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: USING PROCUREMENT FOR A SYSTEMIC FOOD TRANSFORMATION



Public procurement of sustainable and healthy food represents a strategic vehicle to achieve sustainability policies and targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, at national, regional, and local level. Whether it is public health, organic agriculture, animal welfare, social considerations or proximity food economy, the strategic use of food procurement can contribute enormously to the implementation of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy. In addition, public food procurement strategies should be designed to help achieve the 'right to food' enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and include all actors in the food chain from "farm to fork".

Please read [SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OF FOOD: A GOAL WITHIN REACH](#), a briefing paper written in the framework of the EU Food Policy Coalition (EU FPC) Public Procurement Task Force.

1

Minimum mandatory food procurement criteria must **go beyond Green Public Procurement** (GPP), and consider environmental, social and health concerns. Criteria should comply with Farm to Fork strategy objectives and recommendations for healthy and sustainable diets. Aspects, such as animal welfare, organic practices and other agroecological practices, fair trade, small producers and SMEs, and food waste should be considered. The criteria should aim to achieve multiple policy objectives to support the transition towards sustainable food systems.

2

Criteria should be **ambitious, and progressive over time**. Their definition should consider local/regional/national food systems, in particular food production, to avoid creating negative market distortions and to achieve circular, climate friendly and healthy food consumption and production, across EU member states.

3

National and international roundtables of procurement experts should accompany the definition of criteria. This would support the implementation at the local level, and promote a more strategic use of procurement by public buyers. National roundtables and existing local food policy councils could be used as a sounding board for developing and agreeing on criteria and monitor progress.

4

National dietary and nutrition guidelines should set ambitious goals and directions for public procurers of sustainable and healthy meals. Member States should regularly revise their guidelines, based on independent expertise, to progressively include other sustainability dimensions, such as production methods, climate change action and more plant-rich diets with a reduction in the consumption of animal products, alongside nutritional recommendations.

5

The EU and the Member States should provide **financial and technical support** (for instance, in the form of training) to public buyers for a more strategic use of procurement in line with national and local food strategies and objectives. **More research and support** are necessary to study local food systems, environments and sustainable production methods, as well as enabling factors for a more systemic change toward ambitious food strategies in European cities and regions. For example, public buyers need further support in assessing the impact of procurement choices in terms of e.g. carbon reductions, impact on the environment and biodiversity, land use, local employment, as well as the trade-offs between different procurement choices.

6

In line with the [EU's work to promote social economy enterprises](#), a socially responsible food procurement needs to encourage the presence of more farmers in rural areas and include the social economy and social cooperatives along the whole supply chain. Socially responsible procurement means also that public procurers need to ensure **compliance with latest labour and employment laws and agreements**, in particular the ILO core labour standards, both within and outside the EU, when awarding contracts and monitoring execution.

7

Clarification on the rules related to local food procurement to support sustainable, fair and short food supply chains and the local and regional food economy is necessary. This will prevent public authorities from exploiting loopholes, risking legal action for potential infringement of common market rules, if they want to give preference to locally based suppliers and producers to support the regional food economy.