

**FOOD POLICY**  
**Healthier and more sustainable  
school canteens**

**KEY WORDS**  
School canteens, sustainable diets,  
sustainable public bidding

**✓ OBJECTIVES**

- To support the transformation of school canteens towards a more sustainable and healthier food model.
- To enhance the health of children using school canteens.
- To tackle climate emergency by promoting a more sustainable diet in school canteens.
- To foster the activity of the local primary sector and to promote short distribution channels, through the demand of school canteens.
- To prioritise menus that include seasonal and sustainable foods.

**📄 POLICY DESCRIPTION**

“Healthier and more sustainable school canteens” consists of a multiannual programme addressed to primary schools. The Barcelona City Council issues an invitation to tender where interested schools can apply. A commitment by the school, the canteen management company and the students’ families association is required.

The project intervenes at different levels within the schools. Firstly, the technical team undertakes a diagnosis of the management of the kitchen (staff, spaces and equipment) and the school menus, by applying sustainability and health criteria. Later on, a group counselling programme is designed based on the previously identified needs. Recommendations are aimed towards reducing the consumption of animal protein, modulating the frequency of some food items in the menus (red meat, fried foods, dairy desserts, ultra processed food), promoting the use of olive oil and filtered water and increasing the percentage of local, fresh, seasonal and organic food products. Every school is accompanied to define and implement its own action plan, based on its initial situation. Progress occurs on an ongoing basis in order to facilitate the implementation of change. In addition, the programme offers practical training to all actors involved, from kitchen staff to canteen supervisors and family members. An assessment of the implemented changes is carried out at the end of the school year, to measure the progress made.

The policy’s governance body of the initiative (formed by the City Council, Barcelona Public Health Agency and the Technical Office) identifies and creates materials and infographics tackling frequently asked questions in order to deconstruct myths hampering change such as introducing vegetal protein and reducing meat in the menus.

Within the City Council, the Sustainable Food Policy Department aspires to increase the number of participating schools in the near future. It also advocates with the Education and Agriculture Departments, for the introduction of sustainability criteria within public procurement bidding documents.

**CONTRIBUTION TO  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS**



The pilot phase lasted from April 2020 to July 2021 with 6 participating schools. In September 2021, the project was scaled reaching 42 schools and is currently ongoing.

**🏠 DEPARTMENTS IN CHARGE**

Sustainable Food Policy  
Department

*Barcelona Public Health Agency*

*Barcelona Education Consortium*





## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

*Menjadors Ecologics*, technical office implementing the project with the school canteens

Students' families associations

*Xamec*, Catalan Agroecological School Canteens Network

School management staff

Canteens' supervisors

## ASPIRATIONAL QUANTITATIVE OBJECTIVES

To reach 80 education centres during the school year 2022-2023, with the following food frequencies in the school menus: 1) 1 day of pasta, 1 day of rice, 1-2 days of vegetables and 1-2 days of pulses per week; 2) reduce ready-made food to a maximum of twice per month; 3) reducing the amount of fried side dishes, prioritising raw vegetables or other cooking options (steam, oven...); 4) serve animal protein a maximum of 3-4 times per week and only in main dishes, fish once per week, eggs once per week, meat once or twice per week (twice every 2 weeks); 5) avoid serving red and processed meat more than 0-1 times per week (maximum 6 times per month) and white meat 1-2 times per week; 6) reduce fish consumption to 1 day per week; 7) ensure that vegetal protein is the basis of the main dish (6 times per month); and 8) serve salad as a side dish 3-4 times per week.

Overall aspiration of the food policies committed to The Barcelona Challenge:

<https://toolkit.thebcnchallenge.org/challenges/report/246>



## BENEFICIARIES

42 schools



## BUDGET

45,000 € yearly

## STRENGTHS AND SUCCESS POINTS

The main strength of the project is the transversality of its governance system, involving different thematic areas (sustainability, health and education) and bringing a comprehensive overview to the initiative. The proposal also contributes to the improvement on the quality of schools' menus, with the subsequent impact on children's health, and it ensures equal access to a healthy diet for all children.

Part of the success is linked to the adaptability of the supported actions and the suggested improvements to every school's rhythm and needs. Ultimately, school canteens become a leverage for territorial transformation, contributing to the reduction of GHG emissions and the impact of the climate emergency.

## OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

A recurrent obstacle are the cultural barriers to change by all stakeholders: from City Council technicians, to members of students' families associations, to kitchen staff and children. This complexity requires time to design ad-hoc strategies. Thus, the coordination team is developing communication and awareness raising campaigns and trainings with all of them.

The rigidity of the public procurement system hampers discrimination between small and big food providers. The coordination team is working to identify windows of opportunity to introduce sustainability criteria in the public biddings such as proximity and organic production.

## CRITICAL POINTS

The level of schools' implication is satisfactory, as the decision to participate is theirs. However, to scale the initiative, it should become a part of structural food policies for the common good. This step needs to be undertaken during further development of the project.



## CONTACT PERSON

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## FURTHER INFORMATION

Website of "healthier and more sustainable schools' canteens"