

Executive summary

StratKIT final conference

Date: 13.10.2021

Links: <https://youtu.be/u7j37LCuV9Q> and <https://stratkit.vfairs.com/> (only until 11.11.2021)

Moderator: Chris Burns

Agenda

- **Sustainable public meals in a Farm to Fork perspective** - Alexandra Nikolakopoulou (Head of Farm to Fork Strategy Unit at the European Commission's, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG Sante))
- **Joint Baltic Sea Region (BSR) efforts towards sustainable Public Procurement and Catering Services – StratKIT project's wrap-up** - Leena Viitaharju (University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute (FI))
- **Piloting sustainability transformations across the BSR** - Urszula Ala-Karvia (University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute (FI))
- **Green dietary transformation in Social Welfare Home in Rybnik, Poland** - Renata Kazimierczak (Warsaw University of Life Sciences (PL))
- **School Green Garden as an education tool** - Ekaterina Filippova (Herzen University, Saint-Petersburg (RU))
- **Sustainable Public Meal Toolkit – Why and how to use it?** (Karen Thorsted Hamann (IFAU Institute for Food Studies & Agro Industrial Development (DK)) and Regine Berges (agrathaer GmbH))
- **Sustainable School Meal Recommendations** - Amalia Ochoa Vidal (ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability)
- **Panel discussion on sustainable food systems and public procurement with:**
 - Alexandra Nikolopoulos (Farm to Fork Strategy Unit, DG Sante)
 - Peter Defranceschi (ICLEI, Head of Brussels Office, Global Food Program Coordinator)
 - Jaana Husu-Kallio (Permanent Secretary, Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)
 - Rita Góralaska-Walczak (Warsaw University of Life Sciences)
 - Emil Andersen (PerfectSeason, plant-based product supplier)
 - Aaro Lode (Baltic Restaurants Estonia AS))

Summary

Green Procurement in a Farm to Fork perspective - Alexandra Nikolakopoulou (DG Sante)

- Alexandra Nikolakopoulou (AN) presented the links between the farm to fork strategy and the relevance of green procurement within the strategy. She also showed the upcoming tasks and ideas to further develop and implement the strategy.
- Research and innovation as well as advisory services play a crucial role as **enablers** of the transition. The real innovation about the Farm to Fork strategy is not the individual actions – it is the **food system approach**.
- The transition will not happen without a **shift in diets and habits**. Research shows that if the European diets were in line with the dietary recommendations, the environmental footprint of the food system would be significantly reduced. Buying sustainably is a very powerful way to enhance the sustainability of the food system and to simultaneously protect the environment and human health.
- Two flagship initiatives: the **minimum mandatory criteria** for sustainable food procurement and a **new framework legislation** on an EU sustainable food system. The objective of the framework legislation is that all food placed on the EU market increasingly becomes sustainable through a socially responsible food value chain. This means creating a constitution law to enable the future development of sustainable food legislation. It will be the translation of the spirit and the rationale of the Farm to Fork Strategy into legislation. Up to now, there is no legal definition of sustainability.
- The introduction of minimum mandatory criteria will improve the **availability and price** of sustainable food. Regions, cities and public institutions will play their part by sourcing sustainable public food.
- Working closely together with the European Joint Research Center (JRC) to define the **food sustainability criteria**. Starting point will be the EU GPP criteria as well as nutritional/health and social criteria.
- Next tasks are to develop further options and to assess their impact. Adaption of the new initiative in 2023.
- Q: How can the ideas and strategies like the European Green Deal be implemented, when you consider pricing, farmer's needs, local governments with low budgets, etc.?

AN: This is not easy. We are going through radical changes. But you can implement the transformation through **incremental changes**, which will lead to a bigger impact. This is why we need the **integrated approach** and to **create a massive demand** – to make sustainable food not a niche product, but **the norm**. The **enablers** are very important. **Taxation** also has a potential: how can we include the negative impact of food on the

environment into the cost of food? There is a need for a more **coherent approach** of the member states, to share best practices and use the full potential of public procurement. This will also support the farmers and is in line with the EU's organic action plan.

Joint Baltic Sea Region efforts towards sustainable public procurement and catering services – StratKIT Project's wrap-up - Leena Viitaharju (Ruralia Institute)

- StratKIT stands for “*Innovative Strategies for Public Catering: Sustainability Toolkit across the Baltic Sea Region (BSR)*” and is funded through the Interreg-BSR program of the EU with additional funding by the Russian Federation. Duration 2019 - 2021. 13 project partners from six countries in the BSR, and hundreds of stakeholders were involved.
- StratKIT is all about food and meals in public procurement – whether it is in kindergartens or hospitals. The **aim** is to make public procurement and catering services more sustainable in the BSR by identifying solutions, developing and testing regional strategies and motivating practitioners to use their opportunities.
- The StratKIT approach was to map the **current situation** and collect **best practices** through interviews and desktop research; develop **sustainability models** showing how strategic progress can be made. It was public procurement and catering professionals who were behind the research. One of the outputs is the tree model for sustainable public procurement and catering services that shows the different sustainability domains and targets.
- StratKIT created a **network** of public and private professionals where they can share ideas and experiences. It is visualized in a map on the website. The Sustainable Food Procurement City interest group formed, national and international events brought stakeholders together. More than 100 enterprises were involved in the project.
- The main outputs, the tools, are gathered in the **sustainable public meal toolkit**.

Piloting sustainability transformations across BSR - Urszula Ala-Karvia (Ruralia Institute)

- Some tools collected in StratKIT were tested in real life in so called **pilots**. The pilots were based on (national) stakeholder needs. Some pilots were conducted at transnational level.
- **18 real-life pilots** were conducted, i.e. changes have been implemented. In **8 transnational pilots** tools from one country were tested in another country. The pilots addressed a **great variety** of places, consumers and stakeholders. From kitchens to gardens, from senior citizens to small children.
- A big obstacle was **Covid** due to the restrictions and uncertainties.

Green Dietary transformation in social welfare homes in Rybnik, Poland - Renata Kazimierczak (Warsaw University of Life Sciences)

- Rybnik is situated in a highly polluted area, which means that organic food is ordered from cleaner regions. Citizens are used to traditional meat-rich food. Nutritional and environmental education is lacking.
- The first task was to measure the level of **food waste** and reduce it. Possible solutions were discussed in a workshop.
- **Sustainable diets** were explored through cooking workshops and tastings.
- To increase **organic food** in the social welfare home, organic farmers were mapped.

School Green Garden as an education tool - Ekaterina Filippova (Herzen University)

- The pilot started in November 2020 – May 2021 in Lyceum 126 in Saint Petersburg. The project idea was developed in a workshop “Game of Goals” (referring to the UN Sustainable Development Goals) and an international StratKIT workshop.
- The idea was to establish a **school garden** and to include it into the curriculum. It proved to be a practical approach for **sustainable food education**. The kids were able to decide on the crops to grow and learned about different growing methods. The feedback from the kids, the teachers and the parents was very positive.
- In a **culinary master class**, the kids learned how to cook healthy and tasty dishes with the produce from the garden.

Sustainable Public Meal Toolkit – Why and how to use it? - Karen Hamann (IFAU) and Regine Berges (agrathaer)

- While public procurement and public meals can have a significant impact due to the scales - **changing practices is difficult**. The toolkit shall support and motivate caterers, procurers, suppliers and policy makers to implement changes towards sustainability. A lot of local initiatives and the StratKIT pilots demonstrate that **change is possible**.
- The toolkit is **easy to use** and **hands-on**. This breaks the barrier to be a first mover in this area. The toolkit also supports users in creating strategies, replication of local initiatives and identifying partners for sustainability initiatives. All this is aimed to support the change of the European food system.
- The toolkit was made with everyone in mind who is connected to the public meal, but it is accessible **for everyone** and hopefully also inspires people not part of the four main stakeholder groups.
- The toolkit provides general **background information** and more than **50 tools**, which are easy to use: they are available in **7 languages**, and include a summary, a step-by-step description and further information, links, keywords and media. The tools are grouped

according to eight topics – the **thematic gateways**: strategies, public procurement, communication and capacity building, organic food, food waste, healthy and plant-based food, resource efficiency, working with farmers

- Special features: individual **collection** and **download** of the tools as well as possibility to **search for tools** based on keywords, topics, users, etc.
- www.sustainable-public-meal.eu

Sustainable School Meal Recommendations - Amalia Ochoa Vidal (ICLEI)

- ICLEI has helped to establish the **City Interest Group on Sustainable School Food Procurement**. The group consists of nine cities - all municipalities involved in StratKIT and some other European cities. The group will continue its work after the end of StratKIT and is **open for further participants**.
- The group has exchanged ideas, strategies and experiences on green procurement, how to turn it into tenders, which criteria to choose to put policies into practices, how to reduce food waste and how to involve parents and suppliers, etc. They also plan to apply new measures for sustainable school food procurement.
- It is possible to make the change to sustainable procurement in a **cost-effective way**, by e.g. buying less, but better meat, smart menu planning, market dialogue, etc.
- The group developed a first draft of **recommendations for policy makers**, including 1) establish a favorable policy framework, 2) health dietary guidelines, 3) minimum mandatory public procurement criteria, 4) restructure public procurement, 5) foster cooperation among smaller-scale farmers and social economy enterprises, 6) sustainable and healthy food procurement, 7) education about food systems and healthy diets, 8) provide resources (e.g. training for the government)
- Link to the city interest group: <https://procuraplus.org/interest-groups/food/>

Panel discussion on sustainable food systems and public procurement moderated by Chris Burns

Q: What do you think about the work on the ground presented today?

- Alexandra Nikolopoulos (AN): The changes and the enthusiasm make me very optimistic. The transformation to sustainable food systems cannot be achieved only through public intervention or legislation. It really requires **cultural change**, the way we are thinking, working, cooking, and consuming. Therefore, actions on the ground are necessary.

Q: How do we overcome pushback? What are the barriers?

- Peter Defranceschi (PD): There are no pushbacks, but instead a **growing** interest in sustainable food & nutrition and the farm to fork strategy. 2021 is the year of food with all the conferences and dialogues. Barriers are the fear that sustainable, healthy, climate-

friendly food procurement **costs more**. But we see in Europe, it does not lead to higher costs when it is done smart and maybe linked to other sustainable development goals. There are also fears from the procurement officers towards the **legal framework**. Even though the Sustainable Procurement Directive is at hand, the officers are not sure how to carry out green procurement correctly.

Q: How does the Finnish government overcome these and other barriers?

- Jaana Husu-Kallio (JHK): From the national government point of view, it all starts from the **strategy**, in which the **targets** and the **will** at a national level are defined. The national strategy for public procurement in Finland includes targets for sustainable food procurement, animal welfare, nutrition and social welfare. You also need a **guide** to implement the strategy, which needs to be updated constantly. Learn across borders and enable national **discussions and debates** on food and sustainability.

Q: Poland has a lot of difficulties with the green transition - how does StratKITs toolkit help to overcome those barriers?

- Rita Goralska-Walczak (RGW): The biggest challenge in Poland is the **lowest price criterion** as the whole system is built on it. The **toolkit** is very divers, inspirational and practical and will help overcome barriers with good examples and new menus. It offers experiences and instructions. It also helps that the toolkit is **available in Polish**.

Q: How do you justify yourself when a government asks about the higher prices for the plant-based food your enterprise offers?

- Emil Andersen (EA): We need a wider supply of plant-based dishes to reach sustainability targets for the future. Therefore, kitchen professionals responsible to implement these targets need **training** to go beyond the “normal”, already available vegetarian or vegan dishes. The training can also **save resources**, as introducing **new plant-based dishes** can be very time consuming.

Q: From what we have seen today, what helps the Baltic restaurants company?

- Aaro Lode (AL): It puts more criteria on us. **But if we want to keep our company going, we need to look at sustainability**; In Estonia, we are pioneering, guiding the market and help to set guidelines for all companies in the field and to show in practice what is possible.

Q: Is there something in the pipeline to make local food procurement easier?

- AN: Local food is part of the farm to fork strategy, but more important are **short supply chains**, because local is also often confused with „national“. The legal constraints around competition and internal market need to be considered. The CAP itself offers some

elements supportive of more local food. Within the farm to fork strategy, the discussion on local food will happen when it comes to deciding on the criteria.

- JHK: It is important to define criteria, not only on sustainability, but also **quality**. Freshness can be a criterion. **So it is not a mission impossible to include local food.**
- PD: We need to look at **strategic procurement**. If there are strategies at the national, regional or local level on climate change action, circular economy, public health, job creation, you can link public procurement to it. Automatically, you will get more regional and local food. It is also important to do **market engagement**, to reach out to the suppliers, retailers and farmers to learn what they are producing and when.
- AL: There are **constraints** with short supply chains. Setting too narrow criteria can lead to singling out one supplier, leading to a monopolized market, leading to increased prices.

Q: How are customers adapting to a more plant-based diet? Is it still necessary to imitate meat?

- EA: **We need both, meat imitations and new tasty vegetable dishes to enable the transition.** There are people who don't like meat imitations. Our company tries to get the best out of vegetables by creating new vegetable dishes, not imitating meat. But it also depends on the countries food culture, if you need meat imitation for the transition.

Q: Will the future offer **plant-based** and **meat** menus or is it only plant-based?

- EA: Hopefully both. Research shows that we should focus less on "this is not meat" and more on the experience and the ingredients - a more positive perception of the meal.
- JHK: Frequently updated **nutritional recommendations** are needed; latest science is obligatory to be considered as well as age-specific recommendations; meat and plant-based diets should not be put against each other. We cannot decide for consumers (meat/plant etc.), but we **need to communicate the scientific facts** (nutrition, climate protection, biodiversity) for individual choices.

Q: How do you make sure to meet the nutritional needs of children and senior citizens with plant-based food?

- EA: We consult **experts**. In a project with Copenhagen University, we matched nutritional values with our knowledge on texture and taste to create plant-based hospital food.

Q: What is the most promising mandatory criterion to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable food system?

- RGW: We need **mandatory criteria** for the share of **plant-based food** and **organic food**. Those are the most important issues not to be voluntary, as we know from our project.

Q: Are the Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria helpful? How is organic production going in Estonia?

- AL: The GPP criteria are not limiting, they are **setting the targets**; they should be aligned with the state targets; when it comes to organic, you have to consider if you want to support the local farmers or have organic food. If you put organic into the procurement criteria in Estonia, you will need to import the food and that will kill the local farmers.

Q: How do you ensure, that the transition is a win-win also for the local farmers?

- JHK: **Ambitious but realistic targets are important!** You have to know the situation (farmers, consumers etc.) and what is possible. In Finland a strategy sets the target of 25% organic in the public food services by 2030. You have to define what kind of products you can produce organically in your own country.
- RGW: We also need **motivation to change**. If organic food becomes mandatory in public procurement, more and more farmers will be motivated to convert to organic.
- PD: **Only asking for a high rate of organic doesn't solve it all**. The question is also, **the origin of the food** and if we want to support **small farmers and SMEs**. In Brazil, a mandatory criterion defines a certain percentage of the procured food needs to come from small farmers. In the upcoming Horizon Europe school food project "Spoonful for change", this will be included. It is important to give guidance for procurers, how this can be done. Another thing is healthy food – this is also a lot about behavioral science – the food needs to be attractive and tasty to change the behavior of the customers.
- AL: What needs to be done is to take the **organic food approach step by step setting realistic limits**. The government has to signal this to the market to **let them prepare for the coming changes**. When it comes to behavioral changes, **kindergartens** are important. If you fail to make a change in the kindergarten, it becomes more difficult to do the change in the schools.

Q: How does the EC comply with its own rules when it comes to its own catering service?

- AL: The EC Canteen procurement includes GPP criteria and they created the **Brussels good food label**. This label is now also used in Luxemburg.

Q: Is organic food from other (far away) countries an opportunity or a threat?

- JHK: This is up to **the buyer to decide** – all food allowed into the EU has its legitimation. Coming to the topic of **food waste**, we had a competition between different ministries on who is best at reducing food waste at event, etc. It made everybody aware and led to behavioral changes.
- RGW: Food with long transportation distances create environmental costs. I would define local as "as close as possible, if not European". While supporting local farmers is important, supporting organic production is also important. Looking at the recent EAT Lancet report on a sustainable food system, **healthy eating patterns is equally important as healthy production of food**. We need to change both to save our planet.

Q: Can renaming food destigmatize it and enhance its consumption?

- EA: There is a lot of great research in this area. What really moves your perception of a meal that you are about to enjoy is if the right impression on the **culinary experience** you are about to get is provided. This is more important than the information if it is with or without meat. We try to be as transparent as possible and name our products mentioning the most important ingredients and show which meals they can be used for. But it also depends on the target group: for private consumers it is important to know how to use the new product to replace another one; in a professional kitchen, this is not so important. The public sector has an important job in putting the focus on the experience of the food – rather than to label it vegetarian / vegan.
- PD: Up to now, canteens are often not the coolest places to hang out. We need to transform the environment around the canteens to make them attractive. **The solution is to provide healthy and delicious food in an attractive setting.**

Q: Will Covid influence public procurement in the future?

- RGW: Covid will have a long-term effect on procurement. While Covid was a challenge with regard to all the uncertainty leading to food waste, stress, etc., it also led to innovations. One of the schools in Poland shifted to pre-ordered food for take-away using an app. This system is still working now.
- JHK: The Covid situation highlighted the importance of local food supply to handle crisis.

Q: How does Covid affect the resilience of the food system?

- AN: We saw the problems caused by the pandemic with the supply of food, seasonal-workers, etc. Therefore, a new section has been included into the farm to fork strategy: **resilience**. Sustainability, being a comprehensive concept, can help the food system to become more resilient – which is also a great opportunity to focus on local food; the EC will publish a **contingency action plan on food security and resilience of the food system**, creating mechanisms and synergies to be better prepared for crisis.