

The Power of the Public Plate

Recommendations for procurers and policy makers || October 2021



One planet
handle with care



Local Governments
for Sustainability
EUROPE

A public plate

that serves people and the planet

Public procurers hold the power to influence the entire food value chain and through their decisions can affect both production and consumption practices. This position creates a strategic opportunity to leverage public sector demand for sustainable development. Seizing the potential, however, comes with great complexity as it requires innovation within the respective procurement system, connecting the actual procurement to a much wider process linking to policy goals and engaging various stakeholders.

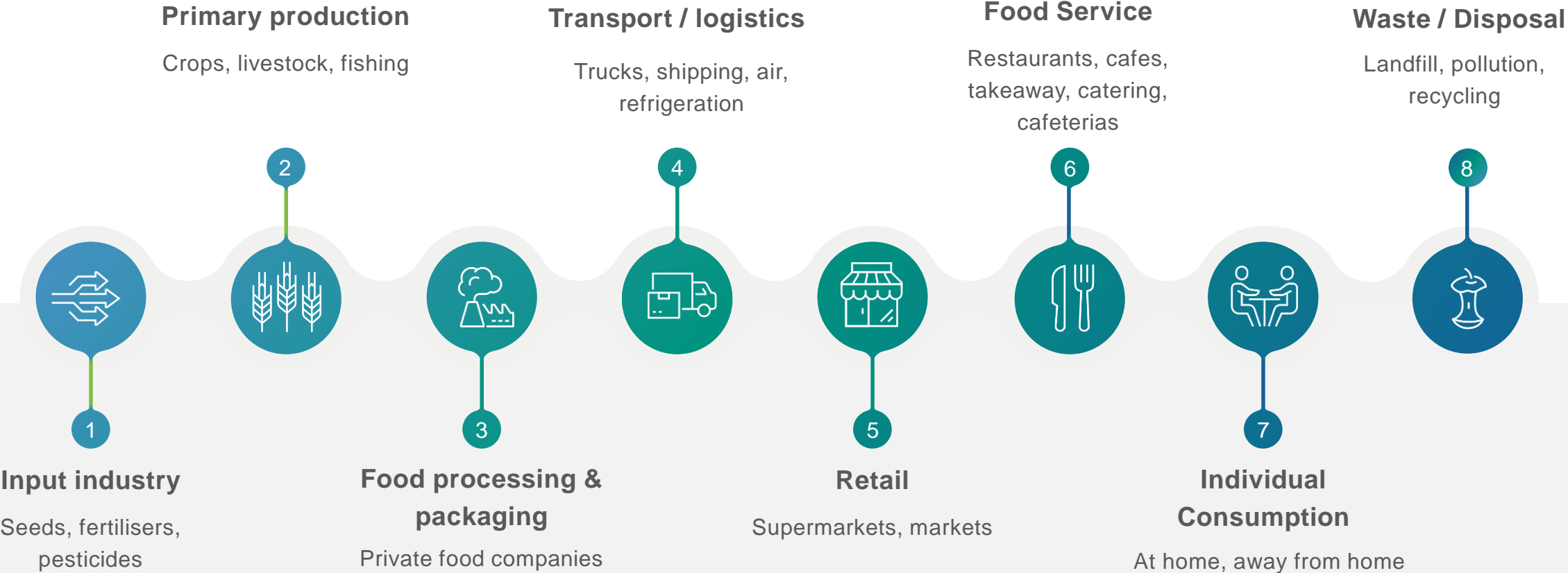


A collection of actionable recommendations

for procurers and policy makers towards procuring food with a value chain perspective.



Overview Food Value Chain





Cross-cutting recommendations

For procurers and policy makers to contribute to a sustainable food value chain.



Adopt system thinking & strategic linking

- Map existing sustainability policies and targets and engage with relevant departments.
- Practice food procurement as a lever to localize the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Understand sustainable food procurement as a farm to fork procurement.
- Connect to efforts around resilient and circular regional (food) economies.



Establish multi-level governance arrangements

- Explore the links and synergies between different governance levels.
- Embed the notion of 'localized' food procurement within a vertically integrated framing.
- Establish formal or informal exchange mechanisms between government actors.

Specific recommendations

For procurers and policy makers to contribute to a sustainable food value chain.



Source locally through fresh and seasonal food items

Farmers within regional geographic proximity have grown the food that is later consumed, with seasonal variance.



Support a healthy & nutritious diet

Serving food that is rich in nutrients and supports a balanced diet.



Enable fair employment conditions

Assuring safe, healthy and fair working conditions across the value chain, requiring compliance with ILO.



Increase the share of plant-rich food and support animal welfare

Favouring / increasing share of plant-based meals and assuring good living conditions of farm animals.



Support smallholder farmers

Enabling small farmers to deliver their produce independently, operating with better profit margins, with an emphasis on supporting women-led farms.



Source organic produce

Sourcing ingredients and food items that have been produced through organic farming techniques including agroforestry, regenerative agriculture or other sustainable production methods.



Reducing waste from food & packaging

Tackling the amount of food wasted as well as single-use plastic and packaging waste.



Specific Recommendation 1

Source locally through fresh and seasonal food items

- Train and enable nutritionists to design food menus aligned with local food items.
- Train kitchen staff to cook with local ingredients.
- Engage in dialogue with local farmers to assure accessibility to the public sector market.
- Use criteria that prioritize fresh, low processed and seasonal food, whilst taking into consideration local cultures, food habits and preferences.
- Establish long-term collaboration among public buyers, producers and nutritionists.
- Favour traditional dishes rich in local fruits and vegetable varieties that support biodiversity and tend to be more economic.

Impact on value chain



“[...] it’s so critical to invest in infrastructure all along the supply chain regionally to withstand the disruptions that we know are going to continue for many years, particularly with the climate crisis.”

**- Alexa Delwiche,
Good Food Purchasing
Programme, USA**



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Specific Recommendation 2

Support smallholder farmers

→ Establish long-term engagement with farmers and producers connected to policies around supporting MSMEs.

→ Set up a regulatory framework with clear eligibility criteria and a unified definition of smallholder farmers.

→ Provide legal and administrative support for farmers to qualify as supplier to the public sector market.

→ Ensure access to information about upcoming tenders.

→ Be consistent in the criteria applied and assuring their relatability to the local food system features.

→ Divide larger tenders into smaller lots and simplify food quality and safety requirements.

→ Allow for variants of food items, when suppliers can meet the minimum amount required.

→ Purchase produce directly from small farms or incentivize producers to do so.

Impact on value chain



“Strengthening those value chains directly with the local farmers may help us to gain fresh and good quality products at a good price, and therefore to scale up this programme and make it more effective.”

**- Meti Tamrat,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**



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Specific Recommendation 3

Support a healthy and nutritious diet

- Apply criteria based on nutrition guidelines.
- Integrate educational programmes on nutrition with meals served.
- Include criteria that specify a high variety of produce (food culture & traditions).
- Link procurement to activities of school feeding programmes.
- Train staff (kitchen/catering) to cook non-highly processed, plant-rich food items.

Impact on value chain



“[In] this time where healthy food is no longer a fad, our message to our constituency is that healthy food is not going to be an expensive alternative, so we realized along the way that we have enough Filipino foods that are healthy, we just need to promote that, and we just need to be aware that this would benefit us”

**- Andrea Villaroman,
Quezon City, Philippines**





Specific Recommendation 4

Enable fair employment conditions

→ Establish a regulatory framework that enables procurers to address the working conditions of people working in the entire food supply chain.

→ Ensure the appropriate balance between quality and price, particularly including the impact of low price on working conditions.

→ Leverage criteria and contract clauses to get suppliers to demonstrate fair working practices along the food supply chain.

→ Set a minimum requirement around the payment of living wage for staff.

→ Include fair trade certification criteria.

→ Use contract management to avoid social dumping by ensuring fair work practices throughout the duration of the contract.

→ Create employment opportunities to the local population.

Impact on value chain



“Procurement can again play a big role, because it’s a multi-policy and multi-actor tool which, by addressing a variety of environmental, social and economic objectives at the same time, can effectively contribute to a shift towards more sustainable models”

**- Matteo Gordini,
Fondazione Ecosistemi, Italy**



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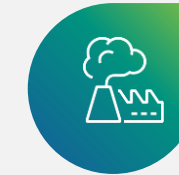


Specific Recommendation 5

Source organic produce

- Include environmental considerations within the procurement criteria.
- Increase farmers' awareness of the economic and environmental benefits of organic production.
- Reference organic (or advanced sustainable agriculture) certification schemes for verification.
- Give opportunities for a phased approach e.g. incremental increase of organic produce with farmers & producers.
- Where possible, ensure organically sourced food is not imported by producers, and list (endemic) species to support local biodiversity and food culture.

Impact on value chain



“By buying more organic, we save the water from pesticides and other chemicals, and we saw [in 2001] that dwellings were being polluted [...] and we had to stop it. [So we decided] to start with ourselves and started transforming our food into more organic.”

**- Betina Bergmann Madsen,
Copenhagen, Denmark**



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→ Address food waste and packaging reduction as strategic contribution to any such targets and policies, in particular circular economy and climate change mitigation.

→ Support short food supply chains to harness the potential to reduce the environmental and carbon footprint as products from shorter distances require less transport and packaging.

→ Consider fresh, seasonal and local food.

→ Look out for new and user-friendly tools and good practices that help procurers to assess the carbon and resource footprint of their procured meals.

→ Invest in market engagement with all stakeholders to understand in a co-creational process where and how food waste and packaging can be reduced in the food chain and through procurement.

Impact on value chain



“I just had the addition of three new granddaughters, and that keeps me going to make sure that we have sustainability in our planet and our food system for the future generations.”

- **Bertrand Weber,**
Minneapolis, USA

Specific Recommendation 6

Reducing waste from food and packaging



Specific Recommendation 7

Increase the share of plant-rich food and support animal welfare

→ Allocate funds for awareness campaigns on the sometimes delicate topic of plant-rich food.

→ Use the two key arguments of less cost and carbon reduction for a strategic food procurement.

→ Make potentially stricter national animal welfare legislation conditional to any food supply and bids from other countries.

→ Increase the share of local species of fruits and vegetables to demonstrate the territorial impact in terms of biodiversity, culture and community.

Impact on value chain



“It’s important that local governments know their territories. So I can suggest [to local governments and procurers] that they can begin with fruit [...] or fresh products.”

- Mirian Johanna Zambrano Benavides, Manta, Ecuador

The Power of the Public Plate

Impacts the entire value chain

Public food procurement can have enormous impact. As the value-chain approach highlights, public procurers are strategically placed along the food value chain to have a great deal of influence on both production and consumption patterns, based on their purchasing decisions.

If seized for the benefit of people and planet, this impact can contribute to a responsible, healthy and resilient food value chain.

Whilst the recommendations are not a panacea and need to be tailored to local contexts, they are a means to turn food for thought into food for action.

One tender at a time.

Call to Action

"[..] just taking that first step to try something new, something that would improve the nutritional status, the health of your citizens, will go a long way." - **Ma-Anne Rosales-Santo Domingo, Quezon City, Philippines**

Explore more and connect

Sustainable Procurement Programme

<https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-public-procurement>

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