

Municipality of Torres Vedras

Sustainable Food School Programme

1. Description

The [Sustainable School Food Programme](#), set up by the Municipality of Torres Vedras in 2014, aims to provide healthy school meals in a social, ecological and sustainable way by, for instance, taking into account the products freshness, territorial development and job creation. The Programme is based on 4 pillars:

1. Production Pillar: the programme promotes the direct contact with the vegetable cultivation process consistent with organic farming techniques, through school gardens and study visits to organic farms managed by the Education Division of the Municipality ("Programa BioHorta Escolar") and with a support of the Environmental Education Centre with an initiative of vegetable gardens in small boxes for some schools. "BioHorta" currently reaches an estimate of 1.200 students enrolled at pre-school as well as in primary school.

2. Acquisition Pillar: the programme exclusively purchases high quality and fresh raw food materials, preferably from local small and medium producers and suppliers, demanding bulk products (when applicable – the product boxes' are always collected by its suppliers on the day after, promoting the reusing of the materials and avoiding waste, thus contributing to a lower ecological footprint), thereby promoting territorial development by increasing the turnover for this sector in the region, as well as increasing the net job creation. For this to be possible, the Municipality divides the products into lots generating multiple tenders, specific for which one of them. This represents lower tenders' values and, though, less will on large companies to be interested in providing raw food materials, representing a promotion of the small and medium suppliers.

3. Cooking Pillar: the Municipality has two central kitchens which supply around 1.300 meals/day (number in the 2019-2020 school year) and developed a network strategy which delegates the competences to the 12 local county authorities, which, themselves contract local private social institutions for the management (cooking and distribution) of the school meals (around 2.700 meals/day in 2019-2020). The menus are carefully prepared with the support of a nutritionist, respecting the nutritional balance, taking into account anthropometric values and favouring local seasonal foods, traditional dishes or the most appreciated in each location, according to the Mediterranean Diet. The municipal kitchens work as "laboratory kitchens" creating the guidelines for the private social institutions' ones. For the future school years it's aimed to reach about the double of meals number at the council.

4. Consumption & Healthy Eating Habits Pillar: parallel programmes for the development of healthy food and promotion of physical activity:
- the [European program](#) 'school fruit and vegetables' and 'school milk' - free distribution of fruit and vegetables to the kindergarten and primary school students (twice a week) and daily milk distribution;

- the '[Lunch With Me in my Birthday](#)' set up by the Municipality - which consists of inviting families to have lunch at school on their children's birthday, with a view to raising awareness of healthy eating practices, also allowing them to be able to evaluate and provide suggestions for daily meals through an anonymous survey. This programme allows to integrate the families in the food theme, approaching the parents to school and their role on food;
- the [Active School](#) - promotion of correct eating habits and increase physical activity to combat childhood obesity, with periodic monitoring of body mass index in school by Physical Education teachers of the 1st cycle of basic education;
- the [Food Waste Separation after the meal](#) – Children can play an active part in sorting out food leftovers, which are then monitored and weighed on a daily basis in order to adapt menus and ensure significant food waste reduction. Sensitize the youngest for the impacts of the food waste in natural resources, is another important goal of this action.

1.1. October – The Food Month

October is annually the "[Food Month](#)", where several events related to Food are promoted, focused especially on schools, but with some actions for the population. The month agenda is dynamic, so every year is improved. Some examples of developed actions:

For schools: awareness actions of healthy food, salt and sugar, good snacks to bring to school, sustainable and organic food; games related with the promotion of food knowledge; tasting activities; study visits to the Municipal Market and to organic farms; the beginning of school gardens new cultivations; special activities related with robotics (for example by programming robots to choose healthy instead of not healthy food) and science experiences on food; special thematic lunches; show cooking's, ...

For population: Awareness actions on Organic Farming/Organic Food; Dedicated sessions for parents on Food theme, integrated into the "Conversas com Pais" - monthly evening event dedicated to parents, where several themes are discussed and presented, counting always with some external reference speakers; dedicated awareness actions of healthy food for the 'Women Gipsy Community', because of the high level of obesity in this population class; ...

2. Impacts

a. Social

- We can say that almost all the entire Torres Vedras' population is included in this programme. Starting with the students from kindergartens and primary schools, their families, the school staff and teachers, local agro-industrial sector and market, non-profit organizations as the private social institutions. Also, we can absolutely assume that, indirectly, all the users of the social services provided by the non-profit organizations are benefited with this Programme;
- Job creation and development of the local economy, promoting the employability of the inhabitants of the counties of the Municipality. Presently it represents about 60 effective employment in the private social institutions;
- At the present time, a partnership with a private social institution (a non-profit organization), responsible for training young people with mental disabilities for job integration, which have an organic certified farm, is being created. This social farm will be able to provide some fresh vegetables and fruits to 3 other institutions, themselves responsible to manage the meals of 4 rural schools. This is also considered as environmental

and nutritional impacts.

b. Environmental

- Stimulating Agri-Food Short Chains and the Circular Economy, by purchasing from small and medium producers and suppliers requiring (where feasible) the delivery of bulk products, usually by daily deliver, resulting in a lower ecological footprint;
- Freshness guarantee not only by the daily provision, but also by the valorisation of suppliers with a less food time transport (from production/storage to the central kitchens), representing less CO₂ emissions and, consequently, another lower ecological footprint;
- Integration of two specific lots of organic products in the meals;
- Food waste management by specific daily cooked quantities according to meals' number and the technical sheets of each daily dish in the menu map, representing no food waste at kitchen level and also a very significant reduction of costs in the production of meals.

c. Nutritional

- Seasonal and cultural menus;
- Increased the quantity of organic products as also as introduced them in all schools of the county;
- Nutritional calculation and mapping of allergens of the dishes of the menu, allowed to establish weight balance of the macronutrients taking into account the age groups, and provision of safer meals;
- Notions of cultivation according to organic farming principles through the Pedagogical Gardens, which in turn are complemented by extracurricular programmes aimed at instilling healthy eating habits and practice of sport that allow the measurement of the results' evolution.

This Programme aims to achieve a Sustainable Kitchen and Food Waste Management, a Healthy Food Education and Sustainable Behaviour Change, a Sustainable Urban Planning and Agricultural Land Use, a Food-Related Local Economy and Job Creation, and a Sustainable Integrated Governance.

The good practice is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030, reaching 9 of the 17 goals as, for example, the Goal 9 'Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation', specifically target 9.3 because the practices increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, and integrates them into value chains and markets.

3. Networks connections/distinctions

In 2015 the Municipality signed the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#) and in 2016 was distinguished by the [Food Nutrition Awards](#). In 2018 joined the [CityFood Network](#) and became a partner of the URBACT [BioCanteens Transfer Network](#). In 2019 has been distinguished with the [European Commission recognition](#) as 'Best practice to help reach the Sustainable Development Goals', in the 'Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems' category. It has recently (April 2020) submitted the application for the [2019 Procura+ Awards](#) of the ICLEI network (*awaiting for results*).

4. Lessons learned

The system implemented depends on the strategic vision and the political commitment of the municipal executive, resulting in a budget increase for the school meals.

Public procurement imposes several restrictions which must have to study at the local level to adapt them to the specific needs.

The food production of Torres Vedras' territory allows the promotion of the food short chains by local producers and/or local suppliers.

By introducing organic vegetables (and fruits), an adaptation of menus was needed, according to the seasonality of the products and by introducing new vegetables that weren't contemplated before. In spite of it, the quantity and variety of organic products are not enough in the region (for example, there is a lack of livestock products). The Municipality is working directly with organic local farmers to managed production plans, according to the canteens' needs. It is also evaluating parallel options to improve organic farming in the territory.