

Deliverable 1.1. PROJECT STUDY

The general aim of the project study is to examine the current school food system in the five partner regions (Klaipeda, Kurzeme, Latgale, Tartu and Vorumaa); this will make it clearer how to build the farm-to-school program framework in a climate-friendly direction.

More specifically, the study aims at disclosing of the conditions and opportunities for the promotion and use of foods produced by local farmers in general education schools in project partner countries, and at defining necessary educational efforts to increase healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy within general education schools and their communities. The study seeks to raise the awareness of all stakeholder groups. Besides, the study will also approach the global sustainability goals Agenda 2030 and the goals in other sustainability and food strategies.

The main planned results:

- Common and uncommon factors between the countries, the differences between the big cities and the small cities in each region.
- The common and different need of farm-to-school programs for large and small, rural and urban schools.

The study would comprise several stages:

I. CONTEXT ANALYSIS IN PROJECT PARTNER COUNTRIES

The aim – to disclose the legal aspects of school food procurement systems at partner countries.

All partners are asked to define the main legal documents that regulate the food procurement in general education schools.

All partners are suggested to ask the following questions:

1. What legal documents regulate procurement of food services in general education schools in your country?
2. How foods / foods services / related facilities are purchased by schools? Are there any models of public procurement of locally grown foods in your countries?

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3. How are *local* foods promoted? Is it possible for farmers to supply schools with local foods directly? Are there any intermediary distributors that help supplying produce from local farmers to schools?
4. Are there any national /regional documents / programs that raise the schools' interest to purchase a variety of fresh local produce from local farmers?
5. What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers?
6. Are there any promotional activities or experiential learning in schools to support nutrition education, including integrating food-related education into the curriculum?
7. What are the roles of municipalities in the implementation of food strategies?
8. Other important issues to be considered.

When preparing the context analysis partners are suggested to use The StratKIT+ project toolkit and other resources <https://www.stratkit.eu/en/>

II. DATA COLLECTION IN PROJECT PARTNER COUNTRIES

The aim - gather data on target groups' (school administration, students, parents, farmers, representatives of responsible departments of municipalities) perceptions of local school food procurement and to collect operational information such as purchasing practices and preferences.

Each project partners will have to collect data in their country / region in order to collect the data from project target groups.

Data will be collected by means of a survey involving project target groups (school heads, students, parents) and Focus group discussion involving local farmers and representatives of responsible departments of municipalities.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURVEY'S IMPLEMENTATION

The aim of the survey is to gather data on target groups' perceptions of local school food procurement and to collect operational information such as purchasing practices and preferences. Data will be collected by means of a survey involving project target groups.

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What are the target groups for project survey?

Three target groups are suggested:

1. Representatives of schools' administration (who deal with food, catering, procurement etc. issues)
2. Students
3. Parents

The size of each target group:

! Each partner selects at least 5 different schools that would reflect their region. It is suggested to involve different types of general education schools (e.g. primary, basic, secondary, but not kindergartens). Also, please, include urban and rural schools.

! Please, survey at least 30 representatives of each 3 target groups (school representatives, students, parents) from the schools selected. In general, each partner should have at least 90 respondents.

There will be two different questionnaires: one for school administration representatives, the other - for students and parents (see below).

It is suggested to use Google survey forms.

! Survey questions are open-ended, that means that extended answers are required.

Questionnaire for school administration

- What is the type of your school in your country's educational system?
- Where is the school located? (urban, rural school)
- How big is your school? (amount of students)
- What are the main documents that regulate school meals?
- Who is responsible for food supply and menu creation at the school?
- What organizations provide food and catering services for your school?
- Do you cooperate with municipalities in planning school's food services procurement?
- Do you get food (vegetables and fruits or other) directly from local farms?
- Is there a system of food procurement directly from local farmers?

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- Are there barriers to purchasing food from local framers? (e.g. country / region food procurement regulations, institution purchasing policies, food safety concerns, lack of local farmers from whom to purchase, lack of support from school community etc.). Please comment.
- What are the major concerns regarding purchasing the food from local farmers? (e.g. cost, quality, safety, delivery, packaging, storage, school labour concerns, threat to current vendor relations etc.). Please comment.
- What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to more sustainable and healthier meals? Why?
- Would there be a need to create/have a farm at the disposal of the school, the production of which would supplement the school's meals?
- Would you like to try a cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students through direct work skills lessons and/or extracurricular activities?
- Would the cooperation with local farmers contribute to educational curricular? Please comment.
- Would the cooperation with local farms contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy within your school community? Please comment.

Questionnaire for Students\ Parents

In your opinion:

- Are there enough vegetables and fruit in the school meals service?
- Do you know who provides food and catering services at school?
- Are you satisfied with school meals? Please comment.
- Are you involved in making meal menus?
- Would you like to have more organic products (vegetables, fruit etc.) in your school meals? Please comment.
- Are you aware of local farmers that could provide your school with organic products? Please comment.
- Would you support the idea of buying food from local farmers even though this could require additional money? Please comment.

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- Would there be a need to create/have a farm at the disposal of the school, the production of which would supplement the school's meals?
- Would you like to have cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students through direct work skills lessons and/or extracurricular activities?
- What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to health education and more sustainable consumption? Please comment.
- Would the cooperation with local farmers contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy? Please comment.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

The aim of the Focus group discussion is to disclose the opinion/expectations/needs/wishes of representatives of target groups.

What are the target groups for Focus group discussion?

Two target groups are suggested:

1. Local farmers
2. Administrators of responsible departments of municipalities, decision makers, representatives of umbrella organizations, other related stakeholders.

The size of each target group should be sufficient for a productive discussion, but not too large, so that all participants have the opportunity to express their opinions. A typical focus group size is between six and twelve participants, ideally eight participants.

! The proposed number of participants for each target group is 8 participants.

! There will be two separate lists of questions: for farmers and for stakeholders.

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How to moderate the Focus group discussion?

When inviting participants, please provide them with the basic information about the project being implemented and the topic of the Focus group discussion. It is recommended to send a project summary.

Duration

50-70 minutes is a good length of focus group. A longer focus group duration is unlikely to contribute to productivity.

Preparation

It is important to create an open atmosphere by offering coffee/tea/snacks.

Provide a pre-prepared introduction:

1. Thank you for your agreement to take part in the discussion
2. Briefly inform that the discussion will be recorded, the data will be processed in accordance with confidentiality and anonymity, and the participants will be coded.
3. The purpose of the focus group
4. Basic rules
 - a. Only one person speaks at a time. Participants should not interrupt each other.
 - b. There are no right or wrong answers.
 - c. Everyone's opinion is important and should be voiced.
5. It is reminded that the discussion will be recorded and it is confirmed that confidentiality is guaranteed.

Moderation

A focus group is usually led by a team consisting of a group moderator and an assistant who takes notes.

When asking questions and accepting answers, you should remember:

- It is better to ask questions in a conversational style.
- Feel free to change the flow of questions or even topics if you notice that some questions are already being answered during the discussion.
- A greater challenge for moderators is to encourage discussion among focus group participants. If the discussion quickly moves to another topic, the moderator must bring it back to the original topic.
- For each question, summarize the group discussion, highlighting the group's observations and disagreements.

Summary and conclusion

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Summarize the main findings. Invite participants to confirm, modify observations, and contribute to conclusions.

Questionnaire for Farmers

- What kind of produce do you grow / supply?
- Would you be interested in growing for your local schools? Please explain.
- Have you already supplied food to any local schools? Please explain.
- What were/would be your main motivation:
 - Economic reasons: revenue generated through school food service sales will have impact on your incomes;
 - Mainly for social reasons: serving children healthy foods and educating children about agriculture.
- Do you have concerns about the existing procurement system in schools when purchasing food services / facilities? Would it be a barrier for you?
- As far as you know, would requirements for hygiene, insurance etc. applied for schools be a barrier for you?
- What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers? Do you have the resources to pack or process your product according to food service specifications?
- Are you able to be flexible in working out a payment schedule to work with a school/food service provider?
- Are there any intermediary distributors that could help you to get your product from the farm to a local school?
- What kind of support from local municipalities would be important? What could be the role of local municipalities in implementing food chains and strategies?
- If you could diversify or expand your production, what would you add to what you're currently doing with regards to school's needs?
- Would you be interested in organizing / participating in events related to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy. Please explain.
- Could you guarantee products and quantities if you know in advance that will be needed by local schools the next year?

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- Are you interested in joining cooperatives that would have a greater opportunity to offer a variety of products and a larger quantity of them? If not, explain the problem in more detail.
- Is there anything that you would like to add or ask? Thank you!

Questions for Stakeholders (food specialists, people in charge of decisions....)

- There has been recent publicity about locally grown food. How do you define “locally grown”?
 - Probes: Same city, region or country? Within a specific radius? Within a day’s drive?
- Can you tell me about your food service operation in general education schools? How do your efforts to buy locally grown food fit into the goals of your food service operation?
- Can you walk me through your procurement procedure for commercial foods?
 - Probes: Who are your vendors (e.g. commercial distributors, shippers, wholesalers, and farmers)? What do they offer in terms of products, services, or financial incentives? Is there a link between the needs of schools and actual local farmers in your county? Are the needs of farmers before procurement taken into consideration?
- What factors do you consider when buying locally grown food?
 - Probes: How important is price? Do you consider product attributes such as organic, quality, and local? Does your relationship with your vendor (including farmers) come into play?
- Can you tell me about your farm to school collaboration (if any)?
 - Probes: How did it get started? How has it changed over the years? Do you have an educational component? Which vendors do you go to for locally grown food? Have you requested locally grown food from your broadline distributor?
- What could motivate you to begin buying locally grown food? What motivates you to continue buying locally grown food?
 - Probes: What are the benefits of buying locally grown food?
- How has local food procurement impacted your budget, if at all?
 - Probes: How much do you pay for locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product) versus non-locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product)?
- What are the challenges, if any, to buying locally grown food?

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- Probes: How do state, or local procurement policies impact your ability to buy locally grown food, if at all? What influence, if any, does the school board or municipal education department have on your procurement decisions? What about students, and parents?

III. ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED

The results of the study will be analyzed by the lead partners and used for the planning of the deliverable 1.2 (pilot implementation).

I. CONTEXT ANALYSIS IN PROJECT PARTNER COUNTRIES

KLAIPEDA REGION, LITHUANIA

1. What legal documents regulate procurement of food services in general education schools in your country?

Minister of Health protection of the republic of Lithuania order "ON THE APPROVAL OF THE PROCEDURES FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF FOOD IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION, GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS" 2018 April 10, order no. V-394 Vilnius. "DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCEDURE FOR ORGANIZING CHILD FEDING" Minister of Health Protection of the Republic of Lithuania 2018 April 10, order no. V-394

Additional legal acts: Lithuanian hygiene norm HN 24:201; "Drinking water safety and quality requirements" (HN 24:2017) etc.

Related acts: Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007, on organic production and labeling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) no. 2092/91 (OJ 2007 L 189; Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania in 2007 November 29 in order no. 3D-524 "On the National Agricultural and Food Products Quality System".

2.1. How foods / food services / related facilities are purchased by schools?

Schools are responsible for creating conditions for organizing children's meals.

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If the owner or a person authorized by him enters into a contract for the provision of catering services for children in schools, the contract must include responsibility for ensuring the hygiene requirements of catering premises. The supply of food products, the installation of the food handling area and the handling of food must comply with the 2002 January 28 Regulation (EC) 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirements of food legislation, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety (OJ 2004 special edition, chapter 15, volume 6, p 463) (hereinafter - Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002), 2004 April 29 European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 on food hygiene (OJ 2004 special edition, chapter 13, volume 34, p. 319) (hereinafter - Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004) and Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 requirements. Fruit, vegetables, berries, potatoes can be purchased from natural persons who must comply with the 2003 regulation of the Director of the State Food and Veterinary Service of the Republic of Lithuania. December 15 in order no. B1-955 "Regarding approval of the requirements for issuing a declaration of conformity of fresh fruits, vegetables, berries, potatoes grown in the Republic of Lithuania" and to issue a declaration of conformity, in accordance with the 2009 Decree of the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania. July 10 by order no. 3D-488 "On the approval of the rules for checking compliance with trade standards of imported, exported and supplied fresh fruits and vegetables for the domestic market".

The requirements of this point do not apply if fruits, vegetables, berries and potatoes are grown by the school itself, but all fruits, berries, vegetables, potatoes intended for food must meet the quality and safety requirements set out in Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 and 2008 of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. September 15 in order no. V-884 "On the Lithuanian hygiene norm HN 54:2017 "Food products.

When concluding contracts for food products, it is recommended to give priority to supplied raw materials and food products that meet the requirements of organic production and labeling of organic products. When concluding food contracts, it is also recommended to give priority to food products and raw materials supplied by short food supply chains from farms (no more than one intermediary between the farm and the catering organizer).

2.2.Are there any models of public procurement of locally grown foods in your countries?

The Public Procurement Council refers to the Guidelines for the Procurement of Food Products (2018).

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This is a methodological tool of a recommendatory nature, prepared during the implementation of the project "Increasing the efficiency of public procurement through methodological measures" financed by the European Social Fund and the state budget of the Republic of Lithuania, project no. 10.1.2-ESFA-V-916-01-0004

The purpose of the guidelines for the purchase of food products (hereinafter - the Guidelines) is to identify and publicize good practices, what actions should be taken by the purchasing organization when faced with problems when purchasing food products, to provide advice to purchasing organizations on how to use the allocated funds to purchase these goods in the most rational way.

However, according to municipalities and farmers, the biggest problem today is still rather complicated public procurement procedures. Small farmers who cannot ensure the diversity of the assortment face competition - it is easier for municipalities to choose one large supplier that will deliver all the necessary products. (LT Žemės ūkio ministerija, <https://zum.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/trumposios-maisto-tiekimo-grandines-atveria-rinkas-vietiniams-produktams>)

Small farms still predominate in Lithuania, but it is becoming more and more difficult for them to operate in market conditions, especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

3. How are local foods promoted? Is it possible for farmers to supply schools with local foods directly? Are there any intermediary distributors that help supplying produce from local farmers to schools?

These questions are difficult to answer because there is not enough direct information.

The Ministry of Agriculture raises the question of how to shorten food supply chains.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MAA) promotes short food supply chains and aims to enable local producers to provide their products to public institutions. In the opinion of the Ministry of Agriculture, the active participation and positive attitude of municipalities is very important here. Partnership is one of the main ways to expand the market for local products, to form permanent connections between consumers and producers.

The number of people who want to create short food supply chains and receive support is constantly increasing. According to the Lithuanian Rural Development 2014-2020 program (RDP) measure "Cooperation" for the activity area "Support for promoting short supply chains and local markets at the local level" in 2019. 16 applications were received, in 2020 this number has increased to 27.

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Local farmers are also actively looking for ways to children's educational institutions participating in the support measure for promoting the consumption of organic and food products produced in accordance with the national agricultural and food quality system in pre-school educational institutions financed by the Ministry of Agriculture. MAA strives for children to eat locally grown and produced food, therefore one of the criteria for selecting applicants is short chains of food supply, i.e. there can be no more than one intermediary between the user and the grower. When ranking applications, preference is given to products grown or produced in the applicant's municipality or neighboring municipalities.

MAA for this support in 2019. allocated 186 thousand EUR, 2020 – 571 thousand EUR, 2021 - 1 million 8 thousand Eur. It is planned to increase the funds proportionally for the years 2022 and 2023 as well.“

Currently the system of regional food logistic centers is being developed in Lithuania. However, it's still just the first steps and need a lot of improvement.

4. Are there any national /regional documents / programs that raise the schools' interest to purchase a variety of fresh local produce form local farmers?

There are national/regional documents/programs encouraging schools to purchase various fresh local products from local farmers, but they are integrated into separate legal regulations (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Public Health Centers, etc.).

Food has strict food quality requirements. Since not all documents specifically mention school meals, programs and guidelines to encourage schools to purchase a variety of fresh local products from local farmers should be tailored to school meals.

Klaipėda Region has a regional specialisation strategy for 2030 where different measures are dedicated to food topics under the „Bioeconomy“ priority. One of them is the promotion of an application of green public procurement criteria on the municipal level, also, district municipalities are working actively on the creation of short food supply chains, organizing catering services in the Klaipėda region in public institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.). Also, on the regional level, the importance of educating society and informing about local food value, is being emphasized.

5. What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers?

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What possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers could be more precisely answered by the companies responsible for catering in schools (providing this service) or the school administration, which provides this service itself.

It depends on the entrepreneurs who provide the catering service or the school, which itself is directly responsible for the catering.

Logistics, when choosing small farms, may be limited by public procurement (criterion - price; quantity of products, etc.). Different logistical conditions can also be affected by the number of students in the school.

Connecting small farms (Agricultural program "to create short food supply chains") - would help simplify the supply of food from small farms to larger schools. For smaller school catering companies, direct contracts would be better.

Recently model of regional food logistic centers is being developed. Here in Klaipėda region, we got one company (Agro-Bazaar) who is working hard on that. Also, the national public procurement agency is working on simplifying conditions for small farmers to participate in the procurements.

6. Are there any promotional activities or experiential learning in schools to support nutrition education, including integrating food-related education into the curriculum?

In kindergartens children have their small gardens where they are growing some veggies and herbs.

7. What are the roles of municipalities in the implementation of food strategies?

Municipalities own schools, including responsibility for school meals. For example, the documents adopted and approved by Klaipėda city municipality: Description of the procedure for organizing meals in educational institutions of Klaipėda City Municipality.

Compensation for catering service in Klaipėda description of the procedure for determining the amount of salary and its recalculation methodology in municipal educational institutions implementing pre-school or pre-school education programs.

There are a total of 33 general education schools in the city of Klaipėda. According to Klaipėda municipality administration, only four schools organize meals themselves. In other schools, food is produced and sold by eight private companies selected through a public tender. Schools sign one- to three-year contracts with them.

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Private companies enter into contracts with food suppliers and farmers. They could provide information about concluded contracts with food suppliers and farmers.

Note: Schools face the problem of catering because they often buy catering services from entrepreneurs. Due to the challenges of recent years (Covid-19, rising electricity prices, rising product prices), entrepreneurs are not interested in continuing contracts. Municipalities take measures to solve these problems.

From the next year, procurement system will change, and all municipalities will become a purchasing organization and will do centralized public procurements (in the existing system each education institution as doing its own procurements).

Some further considerations...

In reality, the biggest problem is the lack of the necessary infrastructure. Neither the heads of educational institutions nor the farmers have the time and ability to devote all their time to the paperwork and documents of public procurement, then to the inspection of goods, logistics, etc.

It's just that the system is not developed and does not work smoothly. It is difficult for small farmers to provide purchases and ensure large quantities of products needed. This requires the cooperation of regional food chains and farmers (which in our case seems quite difficult for farmers).

Today, there are legal options to buy food products from farmers, but that path is quite complicated, which is why few choose it. Everything requires time, desire and seeing the wider picture.

Another task of the region is to promote information and education of the population, why local products and locally produced food are more useful, healthier and better for all of us. Why sometimes it's worth buying less, but getting an all-round quality product.

SURVEY RESULTS

The aim of the survey was to gather data on target groups' perceptions of local school food procurement and to collect operational information such as purchasing practices and preferences. Data was collected by means of a survey involving project target groups.

Three target groups were chosen:

1. Representatives of schools' administration (who deal with food, catering, procurement etc. issues)
2. Students

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3. Parents

The survey was organized in schools of Klaipeda district (Klaipeda, Gargždai, Skuodas, Kretinga). 8 general education schools (6 gymnasias and 1 secondary school) were selected with the aim to reflect the whole district:

Klaipėda “Baltija” gymnasium – University gymnasium;
Klaipėda “Žemyna” gymnasium – University gymnasium
Klaipėda district gymnasium “Vaivorykštė”
Klaipėda district secondary school “Minija”
Skuodas district Mosėdis gymnasium
Kretinga Jurgis Pabrėža university gymnasium
Klaipėda „Vytauto Didžiojo“ gymnasium

3 schools are urban and 4 are from rural areas. All selected schools are rather big – the number of students exceeds 300: 4 schools – 300-500 students; 3 schools – with 500 and more students.

Survey was carried out using Google survey tool. 391 responses were received from students and parents and 7 responses from school administration.

When analyzing quantitative survey data, statistical analysis methods were applied: descriptive statistics (calculated percentage expression).

The analysis of the qualitative data was carried out using the content analysis method. The informants' answers were first processed by means of content analysis, when semantically similar phrases and statements are combined into so-called categories. In other words, individual opinions that are separate but similar to each other have been given a generalizing label. This analysis includes several steps (Žydzūnaitė, 2003): 1) repeated reading of the text; 2) separation of manifest categories based on meaningful words; 3) interpretation and justification of categories with evidence extracted from the text. After this qualitative research procedure, it became possible to calculate the frequencies of categories that showed the prevalence of individual opinions and their combinations in the studied population, i.e. i.e. - made it possible to identify both prevailing and rare, atypical opinions. It should be noted that in the so-called open questions, the specific content of the answers is NOT imposed on the subjects. In principle, the subjects have the opportunity to see, raise and emphasize the most diverse aspects of the question and the problems behind it in their answers. We were guided by the theoretical assumption that the text provided by the informant is the material for content analysis as an educational diagnostic study, reflecting the process of personal reflection as an essential aspect of experiential learning (Jonušaitė, Žydzūnaitė, Merkys, 2005; Schön, 1980).

- **Presentation of findings: students and parents ‘questionnaire**

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To the question “Are you satisfied with the quality of food in your school?” all 100 percent of respondents provided their answers. 37 percent of respondents stated that they are satisfied with the quality of school meals. However, 63 percent were only partly satisfied or dissatisfied.

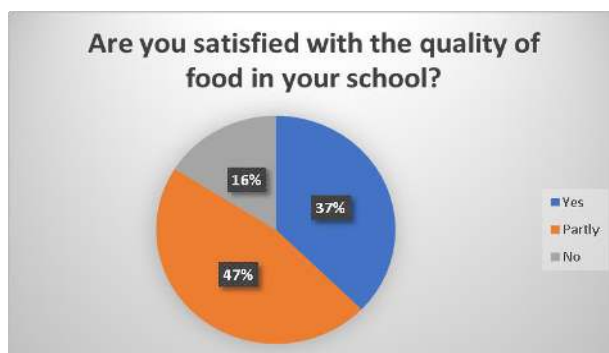


Fig. 1. Satisfaction of the respondents with the quality of school meals (N=391)

As the question was open-ended, respondents were asked to provide their comments. The comments were analyzed applying the method of content analysis.

The analysis of answers of the respondents, who were satisfied with the quality of school food, allowed to extract 3 categories as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1

Reasons for respondents' satisfaction with the quality of school food (N=34)

Category		Illustrative statement
The relation between the price and the quality	56%	This is a good value for money. The food is good and the prices are satisfactory. The quality of food and the prices for food are acceptable for me.
The assortment of dishes	44%	Yes, everything is great. Plenty of dishes. The child likes the food, always eats in the school canteen in the morning and after school.
Tasty food	28%	Yes, very tasty food. The son says that the meal is both tasty and filling.

The analysis of answers provided by the respondents who were partly satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of school food allowed to extract 5 categories (table 2).

Table 2

Reasons for respondents' dissatisfaction with the quality of school food (N=97)

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Category		Illustrative statement
Taste of food	79%	The food is not tasty, a lot of sauces. My daughter complains that it doesn't taste good, so she doesn't eat it. The quality is not good, my son complains. My son has stomach aches after the meals.
Too much sugar containing food	67%	There could be no buns, unnatural juices (packs), just normal food, no chocolates or anything like that. Sweets are distributed to the children every day. Instead, it is better to give a fruit or vegetable every day. There should not be a possibility to buy juice and muffins.
Availability of healthy food	61%	The selection of healthy food is small. There are no truly delicious and healthy choices. There could be a larger selection of vegetables and fruit.
Limited selection of dishes	54%	Dishes are repetitive, little choice Some days, it seems, there is no choice about what to eat. I would like the menu to be more interesting, maybe even some healthier dishes. There is no choice of fruit at all. Vegetables are barely added. The child complains that there is only mashed potatoes in the canteen (there could be just plain boiled potatoes). No choice for vegetarians.
Matters of meal organization	38%	Long queues in a canteen. Cold food. Too many students need to eat and the break is too short.

Having generalized the respondents' answers it is possible to say that even though some part of survey participants is satisfied with the quality of school food and the main reason for that is the relation between the price and the quality, the majority have some claims to the quality: first, the issue of taste, second – too much added sugar, third – big choice of a junk food instead of healthier one.

To the question “Are there enough vegetables and fruit in the school meals service?” all 100 percent of answers were received.

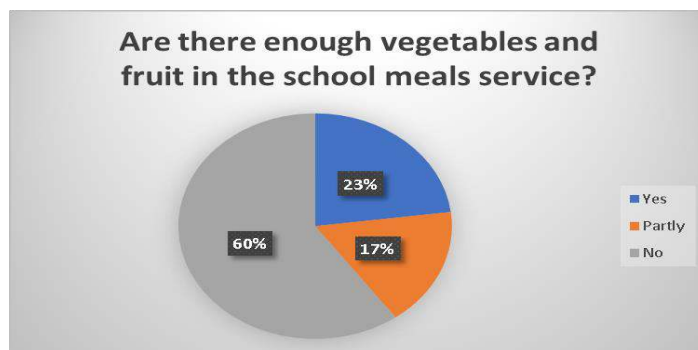


Fig. 2. Respondents' opinion if there is enough vegetables and fruit in the school meals service (N=391)

Only about one fourth of respondents (23%) stated that there are enough of vegetables and fruit, at the same time, more than two thirds (60%) of respondents emphasized that the quantity of vegetables and fruit in school menu, in their opinion, is not really sufficient.

All 100 percent of research participants provided their answers to the question “Are you involved in making meal menus?”

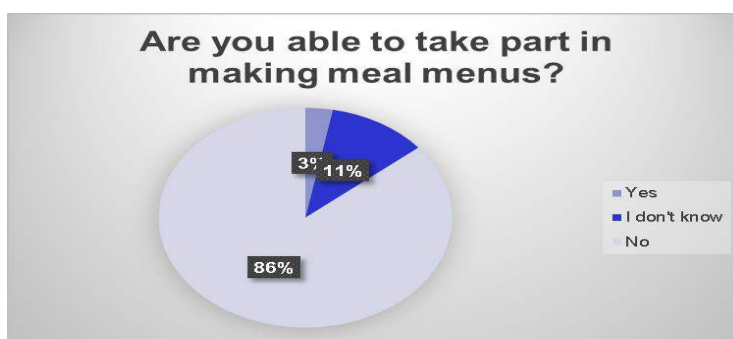


Fig. 3. Ability of respondents to take part in making school meal menus (N=391)

Regretfully, but the majority of respondents (86%) pointed that they are not able to participate in the creation of menus and they do not have information about how they could join this activity (11%). Some of the respondents (3%) pointed that they sometimes participate in the selection of school meals (but that was the case of the school that orders meals from the external providers).

All respondents participating in the survey provided their answers to the question “Would you like to have more organic products (vegetables, fruit etc.) in your school meals?”.

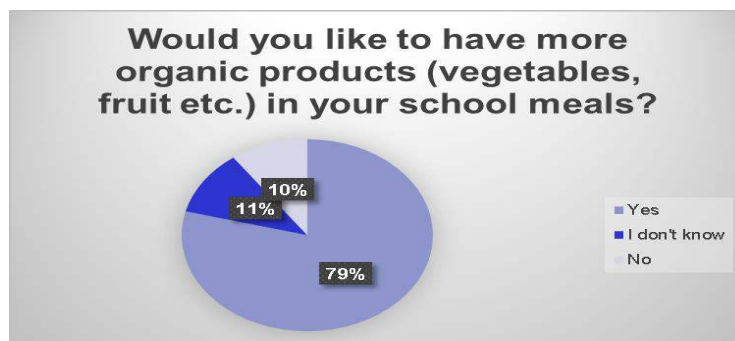


Fig. 4. The willingness of the respondents to have more organic products in school meals (N=391)

Almost four fifths (79%) of the respondents claimed that they would be eager to have more organic products in school menus. The analysis of the comments provided by the respondents allowed to extract the following categories (table 3):

Table 3

The reasons why respondents would like to have more organic products in school menu (N=56)

Category		Illustrative statement
More organic products from local farmers	69%	I would like more seasonality, local production. We would like to have organic products in menus. I would like my son to eat more vegetables.
Healthier food	52%	Vitamins and useful nutrients. I would like more fruits and vegetables, healthier products. I am all for healthier food, but healthy food must also be tasty food.
Ecological food and packages	49%	Ecology is a very important topic these days and I think it would benefit everyone. I also think that it could be a less polluting packaging option, because everyone takes a plastic bag to put one bun in, but if the bags were minimally taxed - we would reduce pollution. You can also use paper bags as an alternative.
Food for vegetarians and vegans	24%	There are few vegetarian and vegan options, so people on those diets are at a disadvantage compared to other people's food choices

The analysis of the data allows stating that the majority of survey participants would like to have more organic products in school meals. The reason are: local foods are considered as healthier and ecological.

To the question “Are you aware of local farmers that could provide your school with organic products?” all 100 percent of answers were received.

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Fig. 5. The awareness of the respondents of the local farmers products (N=391)

The majority of the respondents (78%) stated that they are not aware of such products. Respondents provided their comments that were analyzed and the categories extracted are shown in the table 4:

Table 4

Respondents' opinion on the possibility of attraction of local farmers' products (N=34)

Category		Illustrative statement
Attract more local farmers	59%	I don't know, but it would be easy to find them. Both children's health would benefit, and we would support small farmers. There are many farmers in the area. On the other hand, local farmers need to be supported.
Attract ecological farms	47%	I don't know such farmers personally, but I think there are quite a few local farmers who could provide the school with organic products.

All the 100 percent of the respondents answered to the question “Would you support the idea of buying food from local farmers even though this could require additional money?”.



Fig. 6. Willingness of the respondents to buy from local farmers (N=391)

About one third of the respondents (33%) stated that they would be eager to buy from local farmers even though this could require more money. However, another one third of respondents (38%) would only partly agree to buy. The other part of the respondents (29%) would hardly agree to buy if it requires additional expenses.

The analysis of the comments allowed to extract the categories that are explaining the decision of the respondents.

Table 5

The opinion of the respondents on the idea to buy food from local farmers (N=28)

Category		Illustrative statement
If this really makes value	49%	Yes, if I give you the benefit of eating healthier. Yes, if there were quality products and an adequate price.
Depending on the product quality	34%	Good production is important. If not much more expensive. I would agree

All the respondents (100%) provided their answers to the question “Would there be a need to create/have a farm at the disposal of the school, the production of which would supplement the school's meals?”.

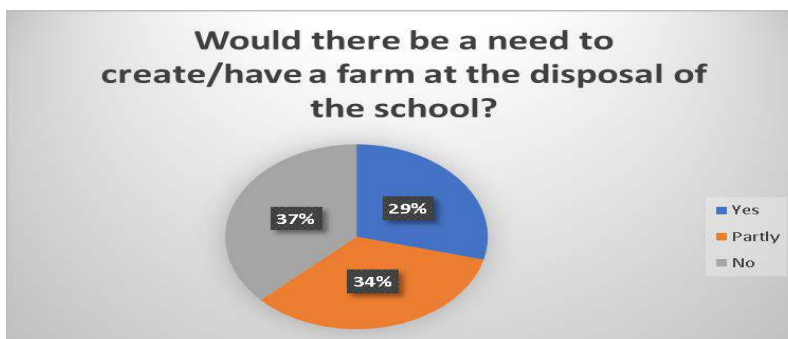


Fig. 7. The opinion of the respondents on the farm at the disposal of a school (N=391)

About one third of the respondents (33%) would support the idea of the farm at the disposal of their school. However, other part of the respondents has some doubts about the idea. Two fifths of the respondents (38%) would partly support it. And 29 percent would not agree.

The analysis of the answers allowed to extract the following categories:

Table 6

The opinion of the respondents on the idea to have a farm at the disposal of the school (N=94)

Category		Illustrative statement
Not very important for school	71%	Because these are additional worries, who would take care of them. A nice wish, but first there are no free plots of land. The second fastest growth of vegetables is in the summer, when the school community is on vacation. Our school doesn't have a lot of funds anyway, so I don't think we can even take on such a thing. This would be a loss-making "business" for the school.
Difficult to adjust to seasons	58%	No. Because there are four seasons in Lithuania, it would be difficult to produce various products in different seasons. That would require a lot of money.
Better to support local farmers	44%	Maybe it would be a really cool idea. but of course labor and financial costs would increase. I think it would be cheaper to buy from farmers. No, because it would require separate working people and it would not be cheaper than buying from the farmers as long as there is someone who takes care of it. It is not enough just to sow. It depends on whether it pays off for the school to invest in agriculture, production and exploitation. If the produce of a local farmer is cheaper, I would choose a contract with farmers. Everyone has to do what they do best. School to teach, farmers to farm.

Respondents were also asked to provide their comments on the question „Would you like to have cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students through direct work skills lessons and/or extracurricular activities?”. The analysis of the comments allowed to extract the following categories:

Table 7

The opinion of the respondents on cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students (N=87)

Category		Illustrative statement
Interesting experience for students	65%	<p>It would be a rewarding experience for children. Maybe the problem of food waste would decrease, because they would become familiar with the processes of food production. Also, the knowledge of protecting the planet and ecology would expand.</p> <p>Yes, educational and extracurricular activities on such farms are very suitable for children.</p> <p>If it was presented in an interesting way, instead of putting just + on, it sounds cool.</p> <p>It is possible to organize educations about ecology.</p> <p>I think that the school should cooperate with local farmers, because their cooperation would help children to be curious and interested in similar activities and children would want to go on such educational excursions.</p>
Returning to soviet times	59%	<p>It reminds us of the Soviet times, when schoolchildren were taken to Soviet farms, the conditions were really poor in terms of legality and hygiene. I think modern farms should be mechanized, unless it is a cognitive activity.</p> <p>I'm going back to the Soviet era, when it was worth going to the kolkhoz fields to work, I don't think that modern youth would like it...but if it would interest,, maybe it's a good idea to attract children.</p>
School is responsible for education	49%	<p>No need. Students already have huge workloads in their studies, let's leave the farming to the farmers. Our high school students are not kindergartners who need to be told, shown (maybe even taken to "practically" help farmers...) about farming. I think these extracurricular activities would be "very unpopular".</p> <p>I do not think that farmers are able to participate in the activities in a qualitative way.</p>

All the respondents (100%) provided their answers to the question „What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to health education and more sustainable consumption?”.

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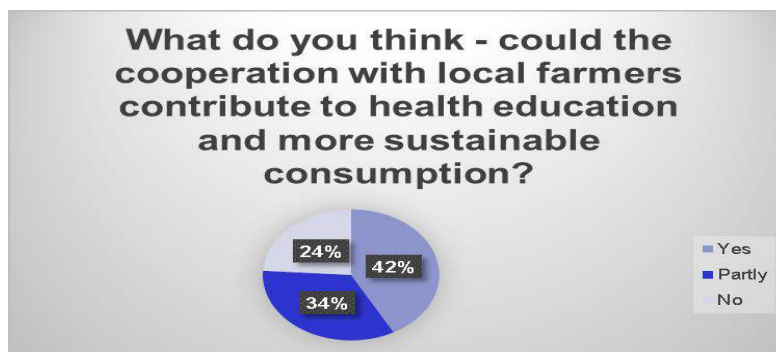


Fig. 8. Respondents' opinion on the cooperation with farmers with the aim to contribute to health education and more sustainable consumption (N=391)

However only two fifths (42%) of the respondents (would support such an idea of cooperation. The majority of the respondents would only partly support (34%) or reject it (24%).

The analysis of the comments of the respondents to the question “Would the cooperation with local farmers contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy?” is provided in the table 8.

Table 8

Respondents' opinion on the cooperation with farmers with the aim to contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy (N=68)

Category		Illustrative statement
Students need more knowledge on ecology and farming	78%	I think so, nowadays, children's knowledge about the concept of agriculture and food system is very narrow. I don't know if cooperation with farmers would change the students' attitude towards food, but I agree that we should at least try to change it. There is a lack of enlightenment about healthy food, lifestyle, cooking healthy meals, how to replace some products with other - healthier ones.
The role of the school and the family is the most important	68%	Children get all the information from the teachers, so if the farmers cooperated with the school, they would still get the information from the teachers and not from the farmers. I think that with the help of parents and teachers, we can tell what good and healthy food is.

Farmers could contribute to education	54%	I think that the appearance of food on the table is taught by the natural sciences. Also educational tours. If the farmers have something more extensive and interesting to say about healthy eating and health-enhancing habits, I agree.
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- **Presentation of findings: school administration**

What organizations provide food and catering services for your school? 6 schools – this service has been owned by private organizations, which now take care of meals and catering. 1 school – steward (householder) of the school.

Who is responsible for food supply and menu creation at the school? 6 schools – private organisations are in charge of food and catering, 1 school - Public Health Office and its specialist.

Do you cooperate with municipalities in planning school's food services procurement? 6 schools – No, because the service is privatized. 1 school – no, because procurement is centralized.

What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to more sustainable and healthier meals? All respondents – yes, food products would come directly from the farm to the school - and healthier and more sustainable relationships locally, and cheaper, etc.

Would the cooperation with local farms contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy within your school community? All schools – yes, through direct participation, students would better understand the benefits of food products, feel the difference between taste, appearance, etc. By participating, they would learn more about agriculture, the advantages of its production, etc. Maybe even interested in agricultural profession.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION RESULTS

A focus group discussion with farmers and other social stakeholders was implemented within the framework of the BSR Food Coalition project. The purpose of the discussion is to find out what problems, fears and expectations local farmers and related social partners have in order to effectively involve farmers. The focus group discussion was held in November 2022. A total of 15 persons participated in the focus group interview. The participants of the focus group were representatives of small and medium-sized businesses of Klaipėda district, representatives of the Department of Agriculture of Klaipėda district municipality administration, representatives of the Department of Education and Sports of Klaipėda district municipality, representatives of educational institutions

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of Skuoda district. The focus group discussion took place at Klaipėda University. The duration of the discussion together with the greeting, introduction, discussion and summary lasted on average about 1 hour 40 minutes. The discussion was attended by a moderator and an assisting person, a member of the research team, who recorded the discussion and asked additional questions to the discussion participants. The members of the focus group were informed about the recording of the discussion and the use of data collected during the discussion in compliance with all ethical principles and confidentiality requirements typical of research. The text of the discussion was processed the day after the speeches, by distinguishing the main themes and sub-themes and discussing them and coordinating them with a colleague who assisted during the discussion.

The questions of the focus group discussion were structured in order to discuss several relevant situations: whether farmers are interested in production, provision of services to educational institutions, how they evaluate the public procurement system, whether they cooperate with educational institutions in order to develop a culture of healthy nutrition, etc.

The participants of the discussion were first asked to introduce themselves and tell a short story about their activities (introductory part of the discussion). Afterwards, guiding discussion questions were asked, which were generally described and more salient features were sought in the utterances (the main part of the focus group discussion). At the end of the discussion, the expressed thoughts and positions were summarized (final part of the discussion). At the same time, it was aimed to record: What are the most important things being discussed? What are the most noticeable differences in the responses of the focus group participants? What were the most prominent and valued moments of the group participants' speeches?

Research participants

10 representatives of small and medium businesses (land and food farms) from the Klaipėda district participated in the focus group discussion. Agriculture and food - a branch of the economy in which the land is used to (extract) food, grow food resources and process and process them. Agriculture also includes animal husbandry, forestry, fish farming, plant breeding, etc. (the farm consists of 3 main groups of branches: agriculture, industry and services) (<https://osp.stat.gov.lt/zemes-ukis1>).

Table 1

Presentation of focus group discussion participants

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Expert code		
Ū1	Poultry	Kretinga district poultry (turkey) farm. The production is provided to preschool education institutions.
Ū2	Beef cattle	Klaipėda district beef cattle (beef) farm. There are no contracts with educational institutions.
Ū3	Poultry	Farm poultry (chicken) of Skuodas district. Has contracts with educational institutions.
Ū4	Poultry	Skuodas district poultry (chicken) farm. Has contracts with educational institutions.
Ū5	Beef cattle	Klaipėda district beef cattle (beef) farm. There are no contracts with educational institutions.
Ū6	Beef cattle	Klaipėda district beef cattle (beef) farm. There are no contracts with educational institutions.
Ū7	Grains, flour, oils	Klaipėda district grain farm. Another field of activity is the production of oils. There are no contracts with educational institutions.
Ū8	Vegetable cultivation	Klaipėda district vegetable and horticulture farm. Teaching of educational programs in progress. Project activity - it is planned to establish a day care center for children with autism syndrome
Ū9, Ū10	Vegetable cultivation	Klaipėda district vegetable and horticulture farm. Project activities.
Ž11	Klaipėda District Municipality Administration Department of Agriculture	Representative
Ž12	Klaipėda District Municipality Administration Department of Agriculture	Representative

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Š13	Education and Sports Department of Klaipėda District Municipality Administration	Representative
M14	Mosėdis children's nursery- kindergarten	Representative
M15	Mosėdis children's nursery- kindergarten	Representative

The discussion was attended by both representatives of crop farms (grains, horticulture) and representatives of beef cattle farms (poultry, beef cattle). Almost half of the participating farmers represented organic farms. Farmers participating in discussion 2 represented biodynamic farms. (A higher form of organic farms is called biodynamic farming). Representatives of the Agriculture Department of the Klaipėda District Municipality Administration, representatives of the Education and Sports Department of the Klaipėda District Municipality also participated in the focus group discussion. The participation of these representatives was crucial in order to define procedures regulated by legal acts, etc. The representatives of the educational institution of Skuoda district also participated in the discussion, who presented the good experience of cooperation with local farms. Such a composition of focus group participants is considered suitable for discussing the chosen problem.

Presentation of research results

Analyzing the transcribed statements of the focus group participants, the following main themes emerged:

- Quality of production/services provided by farms;
- Cooperation with educational institutions: current situation, expectations and challenges;
- Issues of public procurement organization and execution
- Farm education
- The role of the municipality
- Good examples of cooperation between farmers and educational institutions

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The main themes are divided internally into smaller sub-themes that more clearly describe the main theme, the content of which was helped to be revealed by the statements of the members of the focus group discussion (see Table 2).

Table 2

Presentation of themes and sub-themes

Quality of production/services provided by farms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Product/service quality as a success factor in the market - Quality of production/service as a factor of prestige and reputation of the farmer - Farmer growers and farmer producers
Cooperation with educational institutions: current situation, expectations and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current situation: contracts with educational institutions - Assistance to farmers seeking to cooperate with educational institutions - Initiation of cooperation - Motivation for farmers to cooperate with educational institutions - Special requirements for products/services
Issues of organization and execution of public procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance of short circuits - Motivation to participate in public procurement - Public procurement obstacles
Farm education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The need for ecological education - Educational programs on farms - Farms becoming "educational bases" of schools
The role of the municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication and marketing - Creation of a unified platform - Organization of events for target groups (farmers, educational institutions, etc.).
Good examples of cooperation between farmers and educational institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The need for mutual initiative - Education of farmers - Necessity of needs research

Below is a presentation of the results of the research conducted, emphasizing the main themes and sub-themes that emerged.

- **Quality of production/services provided by farms**

When talking about the products they grow/the services they provide, the farmers who participated in the discussion emphasized that the quality of the products/services is the most important factor for their success as an economic sector (representatives of small and medium businesses). "Farmers are always "responsible" for their

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production and strive to ensure its quality in every possible way, as this is one of the most important factors for farmers in order to survive in the market" (Ū2). By providing low-quality products/services, "the farmer will do himself and his children a "disservice" and will simply not enter the market anymore" (Ū1). Participants from the farm sector also emphasized that "we, farmers, know that we provide quality products and we are interested in our products reaching children (Ū2). In addition, the informants added that "a small farm is quality, an industrial farm is quantity. If the kindergarten wants quality food, it should be taken from farms" (Ū3). According to the informants, "educational institutions must realize that they are buying quality" (Ū8). Summarizing the statements of the informants, it can be concluded that farmers seek to ensure the quality of their production and services, and also, in their opinion, they could contribute to improving the quality of food for children in educational institutions.

- **Cooperation with educational institutions: current situation, expectations and challenges**

Farmers participating in the discussion emphasized that currently the cooperation of educational institutions with local farms in the Klaipėda region is not very developed. Some farms in the Klaipėda region provide their production to educational institutions, but only to pre-school education institutions, and only in cases where the institutions themselves carry out purchases (Such purchases of pre-school education institutions were encouraged by the **State program...**)

Several of the farmers who participated in the discussion have had or currently have contracts with educational institutions (preschools) and provide them with their produce. "We participate actively, we have 25 contracts, we are one of the largest providers of services to kindergartens, but we are the only ones here, others do not actively participate" (Ū1). Most often, such examples of cooperation occur when farmers provide one specific type of produce (such as turkey in this case). Other participants said that when cooperating with pre-school education institutions, they are "oriented to people, to specific needs, since we don't have a lot of production, but we have a huge variety, so we already have target customers, whom we simply call and provide as much as we can" (L8). This way of providing products/services to educational institutions is more acceptable for farmers with various fields of activity (eg farmer-growers, farmer-producers).

Other participants in the discussion, farmers, said that they would be interested in the possibility of "getting into" educational institutions. "We have been talking about it for two years now, but it seems that the road is difficult" (Ū7). The participants of the discussion would like more support in this process from the local municipality. The

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informants suggested several possible ways of support: "a responsible person in the municipality could be appointed to advise and provide assistance to farmers who want to participate in public procurement" (Ū7). "There could also be such a model that the municipality collects information about purchases and shares it with interested farmers" (Ū7).

The participants of the discussion also reasoned about the motivation to participate in purchases organized by educational institutions. The discussants also saw the economic motive "of course it's money, so the farmer, thinking about such an opportunity, evaluates himself in terms of his capacity, but on the other hand, also checks (Ū8)". Other participants of the discussion saw the social motives: "On the other hand, it is an opportunity to contribute to more noble goals - a culture of healthy eating, etc. formation" (Ū2). However, the participants of the discussion agreed that cooperation with educational institutions "should be a win-win strategy for farmers" (Ū8), as it would meet both economic and social needs. "Every entrepreneur is calculating. However, if the provided product or service would help solve other problems and also contribute to the development of healthy eating skills, it would be a great result" (Ū10).

Regarding the cooperation between farmers and educational institutions, the informants saw an important question - who becomes the initiator of such cooperation - "do farmers find a kindergarten, or does the kindergarten itself look for and approach the farmers?" (Ū7). According to the farmers, they are partly held back by not knowing how to act, "we minimally applied to kindergartens, because through the prism of fears about those public procurements, we know that we won't be able to do much" (Ū7). Participants in the discussion, representatives of the educational institution, emphasized that the development of cooperation between the educational institution and farmers is "a matter of attitude, whether to put in the effort - to go look for the farmer, talk with him, on the other hand, the purchases for the educational institution increase, because you buy potatoes from one, poultry from another and you can buy everything immediately from the wholesale provider" (M15). Meanwhile, farmer informants said that educational institutions could show more initiative to cooperate with farmers (Ū5, Ū6). The participants of the discussion came to the opinion that both sides lack information and communication.

During the discussion, the issue of special requirements (e.g. hygiene, quality, logistics, etc.) for farmers' products/services, taking into account the specifics of educational institutions, was also discussed. In response, the informants emphasized that "yes, of course there are such requirements and the production is checked by the

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Veterinary Service, etc., but it is very easy to make an agreement with the farmers, you just tell them how much you need and on what day and they bring you fresh produce" (M13). An important aspect is logistical issues. Educational institutions do not have storage facilities, so "they can buy only a small amount of produce, so it is also additional work for the person in charge - to calculate how much is needed and what is needed, and also how long it will be used" (M15).

- **Issues of organization and execution of public procurement**

In the currently existing practice of public procurement, managers of educational institutions organize small purchases (up to EUR 15,000), according to farmers, this is a good practice, because managers know what products their institutions need. According to the informants, "if the farmer buys low-quality produce, the cooks will put it on the table and say 'eat it yourself'" (Ū1). The informants emphasized that "the managers of the educational institutions are really able to buy a quality product, but if the municipalities buy it, there will be no reason to complain, you will have to eat, because the arguments will be that we bought it according to the current laws, we bought it cheaply (Ū2). However, in such a case, according to the participants of the discussion, there is a high probability that the children will receive lower quality food, which the children will simply not want to eat, and then many will say "that the children are spoiled, their eating habits have not been formed (Ū2).

Farmer participants in the discussion emphasized that short chains (i.e. there can be no more than one intermediary between the consumer and the grower) are very effective "after all, buying local food supports the country's economy and fosters community spirit" (Ū10). The participants in the discussion emphasized such short chains as well. advantages such as: "kindergartens will definitely receive fresh, high-quality food, not a rotten product" (Ū8), "children have different needs, they sometimes care about the color of tomatoes, so it is very important to know those needs" (Ū9). According to the informants, there should be direct communication between the nursery school and the farmer.

However, in Lithuania, there is currently a tendency to increase public procurement, i.e. to centralize them (we want to put purchases in the hands of municipalities). Farmers expressed their fear that this would pose a great threat to food quality - they would buy from large suppliers who have the ability to offer lower prices but are not responsible for quality. The most important criterion for such centralized purchases is price, while quality criteria are rarely strictly defined in technical specifications. According to the informants, "industrial farm and wholesale trade is about quantity, according to informants, small farms are about quality" (Ū3). According to the informants,

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it is very important to maintain short chains: "It is necessary to maintain short chains, not to get involved in mass purchases, because the human-farmer is responsible for quality" (Ū2). "How will the purchases be scaled up, what product will the children get?" High-quality or simply cheaper?" (Ļ9). However, the participants of the discussion also emphasized the fact that by abandoning the short chains, the additional administrative burden increases and "the short chain is put under pressure, we put it on the neck of the farmer, one thing - the requirements are getting stricter, another thing - "paperwork", new forms of reports are appearing" (Ū2). In the opinion of the informants, "perhaps the process of centralizing public procurement would help the educational institutions themselves (because they would take over that function), but there would no longer be a short circuit" (Ū4). According to farmers, decentralized public procurement would give freedom to farmers and help them get fresh produce directly from the farm.

- **Education carried out by farms**

The participants of the discussion emphasized that children should be taught from an early age "children must also know where milk comes from and where potatoes grow" (Ū2), because in this way we will contribute to the formation of their healthy eating skills.

Participants in the discussion organic farms conduct educational programs about what is ecology and healthier food. But "currently, these educational programs are more attractive to adult communities that are concerned with healthy eating issues" (Ū7), according to the participants of the discussion, it would be important to promote this type of education in educational institutions as well. According to the informants, educational programs about organic food from the mouths of farmers would be significant for both children and parents, so that with their help, healthy eating skills could be formed more effectively. Other participants in the discussion emphasized that they have been conducting educational activities on their farms for some time and invite educational institutions to actively participate in their programs. "We want to form a person's deep attitude towards what is important through real examples, because when people come to the farm, they see with their own eyes how everything grows" (Ū8).

The participants of the discussion said that they would be interested in allocating part of their land to educational institutions, so that the students themselves could grow produce when they arrived. In addition, the farmers participating in the discussion supported the initiative for educational institutions to go to their farms for educational purposes, to contribute by organizing educational sessions.

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- **The role of the municipality**

Speaking about the role of the local municipality in promoting the involvement of farmers, the participants of the discussion noted that it would be very important to ensure proper information and communication. The farmers who took part in the discussion emphasized that "some kind of page should appear, where all farmers would gather what they grow, so that anyone, a school, a kindergarten, could find information" (Ū8). The informants said that there are such initiatives (interactive maps, etc.), but "it would be relevant for every district to have such a map" (Ū8). It would also be important to publish educational activities carried out by farmers. However, the informants emphasized that economic and other factors would be important. considerations "a farmer must have a walkie-talkie (mark on the map or advertise his products, services) for whom I am doing this, why it is economically beneficial for me" (Ū9). Other participants noted that there are project activities that have led to the creation of such initiatives (eg the AgroBazaar project), but these initiatives are not publicly known.

On the other hand, the informants emphasized the role of the Municipal Agriculture Department. "We have an intermediary institution, the Department of Agriculture, which has all that information" (Ū1), "could be an effective mediator between farmers and educational institutions." However, such possibilities are somewhat limited by the existing data protection legal acts. Informants agreed that municipalities could create an open platform where farmers themselves could identify themselves on the map.

The farmers participating in the discussion emphasized that "the most important thing is to publicize information about organic farmers, that we have such farmers and that they can provide healthier food for children" (Ū7). "There are farms willing to invite students to educational programs." The representatives of the municipality agreed that it would be very important to organize joint events for target groups, "we have farm data tables that we constantly fill in, we personally contact when needed, but this is not effective communication, it is necessary for both parties to learn the advantages of cooperation (Ž11). The informants suggested organizing a "conference for educational institutions to bring both parties together to realize mutual benefits" (M15).

Another important observation of the informants is that municipalities could declare the priority of healthy meals in their strategic documents. Farmers' involvement could then be promoted through various formal means.

- **Good examples**

The representatives of the educational institution that participated in the discussion shared their examples of good practice. "We buy, we buy a lot, we compared the prices, it's really not much different compared to wholesale

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suppliers" (M13). The informants emphasized that they search for and choose farmers themselves. "It's convenient for schools to order a week's worth of food, because they don't have the conditions to store it; freshness, variety, and seasonality of food are important" (Ū8). The informants gave examples of the participation of educational institutions (preschool education institutions) in the state program "", and also emphasized the need for children's ecological education (Š12).

Meanwhile, the farmers participating in the discussion emphasized that they are developing the idea of cooperation with educational institutions and would like closer cooperation with educational institutions, but they do not know how to achieve it, therefore, in their opinion, there should be a mutual initiative.

The participants of the discussion expressed the need to "educate the farmers themselves - that today's understanding of cooperation combines management, which gives food growers the opportunity to provide a more varied choice and fulfill the catering wishes of public institutions (according to seasonality, according to the variety of products, to insure against extreme natural conditions or relevant conditions that limit obligations to provide food, etc.)" (Ļ9). The expressed need is that not only food growers, but also food producers (producers) should come together.

In order for the cooperation of farmers and educational institutions to be smooth, it is necessary to carry out needs studies. "Both educational institutions and farmers themselves should clearly express their needs for cooperation" (Ū4), this would facilitate the involvement of farmers.

VÕRU COUNTY, ESTONIA

1. What legal documents regulate procurement of food services in general education schools in your country?

The food offered in children's institutions must meet the requirements of the regulation "Health protection requirements for catering in preschool institutions and schools" by the Minister of Social Affairs
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/120042012008?LeiaKehtiv>

At the same time, when procuring catering for your children's institution, it is possible to make demands that the food prepared according to it meets the latest recommendations, and many institutions already do this. Procurement is organized on the basis of the Public Procurement Act
<https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/105052022043>.

2. How foods / foods services / related facilities are purchased by schools? Are there any models of public procurement of locally grown foods in your countries?

The owner of the school, i.e. the local government, decides how the organisation of catering in educational institutions will take place. The head of the school will act in accordance with this decision. In general, there are three main models of catering:

- 1) smaller schools, where the institution has its own kitchen and cooks, or the designated employees acquire raw materials from freely selected providers;
- 2) institutions with the obligation to procure raw materials, where the procurement of raw materials by the institution is organised for their kitchen;
- 3) larger schools, where the school together with the local government organises a procurement for the provision of catering services; the raw materials are organised by the kitchen service provider;

3. How are local foods promoted? Is it possible for farmers to supply schools with local foods directly? Are there any intermediary distributors that help supplying produce from local farmers to schools?

There is no direct promotion of local food in the children's institution. In Võru County, there are two local food brands of small producers, Seto Küük and UMA MEKK. Uma Mekk is a trademark of the food production of Old

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Võromaa, which can be applied for by entrepreneurs operating in the food sector here, whose products contain 50% of the raw materials from the region. In 2020, five municipalities in Võru county and the development organizations Võrumaa Arenduskeskus and Setomaa Liit signed a goodwill agreement that by 2024 Võrumaa's educational institutions will offer 20% of raw materials as organic (locally if possible).

Farms can supply institutions with local food if they have received a corresponding agreement with the chef. There is no direct intermediary for offering local produce to schools. However, A.M.F.Hulgi, a wholesale warehouse that supplies educational institutions, is happy to take products from local farms if there is an agreement with the entrepreneur.

4. Are there any national /regional documents / programs that raise the schools' interest to purchase a variety of fresh local produce form local farmers?

There are no measures to increase the interest in buying fresh local products directly. The fruit and vegetable school scheme measure works for kindergarten and 1-5 grade students. The school scheme is a programme implemented within the framework of the common market organisation for agricultural products in the European Union. It promotes the reaching of children of fruit and vegetables, milk and dairy products and supports the development of healthy eating habits of children <https://www.pria.ee/toetused/koolikava-toetus>. Starting from the second quarter of 2022, institutions holding the eco-label for catering will receive a quarter-by-quarter allowance of 2.20€ per school child and 4.90€ per kindergarten child per month <https://www.pria.ee/toetused/haridusasutuses-mahepollumajandusliku-toidu-ja-mahepollumajanduslikke-koostisosi-sisaldava>.

5. What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers?

The easiest logistics to an educational institution is to deliver the farm's products to the institution with its own transport, close to the farm or in a logistically suitable area. Another option is a logistics service for the institutions of the entire region in cooperation with a bulk warehouse. In addition, it is possible to order door-to-door courier service.

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6. Are there any promotional activities or experiential learning in schools to support nutrition education, including integrating food-related education into the curriculum?

We have organised with schools the Family Day activities for children. The Day was full on different activities, including cooking events with Master Chief. Last two years there is ongoing event – organic cooking competition. The dishes prepared are evaluated by a prestigious jury. The Association of Chefs has done cooking days with chefs in schools. Some schools have cooking circles where the children themselves can cook.

There is no extra integrated food- related education in curriculum. The cooking classes are obligatory and should be organised in 5th grade.

7. What are the roles of municipalities in the implementation of food strategies?

Local authorities do not have food strategies nowadays. The municipality have the possibilities to change food strategies for public institutions.

8. Other important issues to be considered.

Of the 45 educational institutions in Võru County, 23 have the organic catering ecolabel and use at least 20% mainly local organic raw materials.

SURVEY RESULTS

In Võru county, the activities started in mid-November, first translating the student/parents' and administration's survey questions into Estonian and preparing them for Google Forms. Then sending out student/parent and administration surveys to 23 schools. Making summary diagrams and translating them into English in the first week of December. We have summarized the survey of student/parent and administration in Excel.

Summary of the survey

The administration's questions were answered by 2 schools with less than 100 children and one with 700 children, the other 5 schools were of medium size. There were a total of twelve respondents.

Respondents were able to answer about legislative acts regulating school meals and suppliers of raw materials. The owner of the school, i.e. the local government, decides how the organisation of catering in educational

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institutions will take place. The head of the school will act in accordance with this decision. In general, there are three main models of catering:

1) smaller schools, where the institution has its own kitchen and cooks, or the designated employees acquire raw materials from freely selected providers, but mostly all raw materials are purchased through bulk warehouses, only a few schools that answered the questions have direct links with farms. In the survey, four schools answered that they had not procured. In the focus group interview was pointed, that in rural schools without procurement, there are several suppliers, as well as producers and farms in addition to the bulk warehouse. At the same time, small schools far from the city have limited options in the choice of suppliers, especially if there are no producers in the area, then a wholesale warehouse usually supplies.

2) institutions with the obligation to procure raw materials, where the procurement of raw materials by the institution is organised for their kitchen. Three of the respondent schools have procurement of raw materials. In the focus group interview, it was pointed out that schools receive goods from local organic producers from a bulk warehouse or a catering company, with whom farms can cooperate in the field of logistics.

3) larger schools, where the school together with the local government organises a procurement for the provision of catering services; the raw materials are organised by the kitchen service provider. There is generally no system for sourcing directly from farms. One school replied that the local government procures their catering services together for several schools.

In the focus group interview, it was believed that local food - the closer to the place of consumption, the better, for example within the county. Also South Estonia or Estonia. Without procurement, schools in the county have a relatively free hand in choosing suppliers, budget is the main limiting factor, no one directly dictates where to buy from. In the case of procurement, it depends on the procurement conditions whether the wholesaler would be interested in involving local producers.

There is no system of food procurement directly from local farmers. In one of the responding schools, the catering service provider has direct relations with small producers, and organic products reach the school's kitchen through the service provider. The goods of the local small producer can reach other schools through a wholesaler who has a price list of organic products for this purpose. The focus group interview revealed that currently, the goal in smaller schools is to get as much local raw materials as possible and to restore the network of farms. Larger schools with a procurement obligation cannot include the requirement of local food in the procurement, as this

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would be against the principles of the EU common market. Organic production requirements can be included in the tender, as this is the EU production quality standard.

As local small producers mostly lack the capacity to provide year-round supplies, six out of twelve responses cited this as a key issue why schools find it difficult to use their products.

Obstacles to buying products from local producers were pointed out cost (3 respondents), delivery (2 respondents), storage (2 respondents), school labour concerns (3 respondents), threat to current vendor relations. In addition, it was pointed out that local producers do not participate in procurements if the school has to use a vendor selected through procurement (4 respondents) and the school itself does not know small producers. The focus group interview also revealed that currently, local farms have also brought apples for free if it's a good apple year, depending on the situation. The price of local products is mostly negotiable, and considering the market price, the price has remained within reasonable limits, so that there is enough money in the budget and schools can afford to buy until the end of the school year.

Three respondents indicated that cooperation with local farmers contribute to more healthier meals. The effect of cooperation with local farms is highlighted in the responses of school representatives - smaller ecological footprint, faster delivery, fresher, more reliable raw materials. One respondent thought that it did not affect the healthiness of the food.

Six respondents thought that there would be no need for a separate farm under the school. Four respondents felt that it needed a lot of changes and resources, but could introduce students to where the food on their table comes from and what kind of effort it takes to do so. This would also help to change the consumption habits of young people. Two answered that yes, this farm would be needed.

Regarding cooperation with organic farms, eight respondents thought that it could be tried or that they have already cooperated in this way. Four respondents found that it is not a priority at the moment or maybe in the future.

Most of the respondents thought that cooperation with local farmers is definitely needed, which will contribute to the curricula.

All respondents agreed that, the cooperation with local farms contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy within our school community. In the focus group interview, it was pointed out that cooperation with farms works in different forms, depending on the farm for a

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shorter or longer time. In addition to ordering local products for the kitchen, the children go to farms to learn how to do different jobs, visit open farm days, the locals themselves have come to the school to offer their products. 9 producers and one wholesaler representative participated in the focus group of organic farmers. Five organic producers were from horticultural farms and 4 were crop growers. One farm and a wholesale warehouse have experience in delivering to schools, the others were all interested in offering products to schools in the future. The common opinion was that in business, the economic side is important, but the social and community side are also very important when offering local organic products, several entrepreneurs emphasized this separately. No one saw a barrier to offering their products to schools due to the procurement system, health protection requirements, insurance etc. The majority sell their own products directly to the school, currently wholesaler A.M.F.Hulgi offers logistics three times a week to everyone if needed. Most farmers have limited options on the packaging and processing side, but they are willing to be flexible with deliveries and payments and the entrepreneurs are ready to start offering additional products if schools are interested. But farms are not always ready to make binding commitments, citing the possibility that the crop may withers. Entrepreneurs are interested in cooperation if their specific interest is involved, networking and joint offers are of interest to farms. Entrepreneurs were open and ready to participate in organizing events and presenting their production or business, it is important for them to introduce food and agricultural knowledge and practices to the future generation. Entrepreneurs expect local governments to value organic products, procurements should be organized in parts and the requirement of organic proportion should be written into the procurements.

In the survey we received 66 responses from children/parents and 12 responses from the administration. In a survey of students and parents, 50% answered that they do not know who provides them or their children with food at school. Despite this, with a few exceptions, the majority were satisfied with the menu and dishes offered at school. At the same time, only 9% of respondents had participated in tasting days or had been involved in making menus in some way. The majority of the respondents, 81.1%, thought that if it were possible in terms of price, there should be more organic products in the school meals, especially local fruits and vegetables. Most of the respondents, or 85%, did not know local organic producers who already offer or could offer organic products to schools. Almost 90% of the respondents supported the idea of buying raw materials from local producers, even if it would require additional money. More than two-thirds of the respondents found that there is a need for a farm under the school. What is produced in it would be a supplement to school food and would give children the

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opportunity to see how food is grown and learn how to do the work themselves. Also, 86% of respondents liked the idea of local farm producers being a practical learning base for students. As many as 90% of respondents thought that cooperation with local farms would contribute to education about more sustainable consumption and health awareness. In the opinion of 94% of the respondents, cooperation with farms would also contribute to a healthy diet and generally healthy habits by helping to understand the food system.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION RESULTS

What kind of produce do you grow / supply?

3. Margus Timmo Konspek OÜ - blackcurrant berries and juice, beetroot; berries and apples from Aarne Hilep Väike-Soo farm;
4. Agu Hollo Hartsmäe farm grows potatoes;
5. Tarmo Trommel Berrymush OÜ wild berries and mushrooms;
6. Margus Palok Männi Mahetalu OÜ blackcurrants, garlic;
7. Vardo Valli Hobusalu OÜ sheep and beef cattle;
8. Andres Soots grows grain with his brother;
9. Illimar Siska A.M.F.Hulgi warehouse manager, organizes supplying schools with organic food;
10. Leander Konks Vanaküla Aiand OÜ apple orchard with 9000 trees.

Would you be interested in growing for your local schools? Please explain. Have you already supplied food to any local schools? Please explain.

Konspek OÜ has supplied juice to approx. 40 schools in Southern Estonia, beetroot has also been delivered for a few months, plans to continue offering juice, frozen berries are also available if needed; Väike-Soo farm berries and apples can be offered if interested; Berrymush OÜ is interested in cooperation to offer frozen berries, currently there has been only a small amount of interest from schools; Hobusalu OÜ would like to offer lamb; Vanaküla Garden is interested in offering apples; several farms were ready to offer vegetables in the future if interested.

What were/would be your main motivation:

Economic reasons: revenue generated through school food service sales will have impact on your incomes;

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Mainly for social reasons: serving children healthy foods and educating children about agriculture.

In business, the economic side is important, but the social and community side are also very important when offering local organic products, several entrepreneurs emphasized this separately.

Do you have concerns about the existing procurement system in schools when purchasing food services / facilities? Would it be a barrier for you?

In the current case, most schools do not have a requirement to organize a procurement, if a procurement is required, the farms can provide through a caterer or a bulk warehouse.

As far as you know, would requirements for hygiene, insurance etc. applied for schools be a barrier for you?

No one has had a problem with it. The schools have not had a requirement for a year-round supply, the supply has also taken place seasonally if necessary, this is not an obstacle.

What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers? Do you have the resources to pack or process your product according to food service specifications?

The majority sell their own products directly to the school, currently A.M.F.Hulgi offers logistics to everyone if needed. Most manufacturers have limited options on the packaging and processing side.

Are you able to be flexible in working out a payment schedule to work with a school/food service provider?

All manufacturers are willing to be flexible with deliveries and payments.

Are there any intermediary distributors that could help you to get your product from the farm to a local school?

There is a wholesale warehouse in the area that organizes deliveries to all customers three times a week.

What kind of support from local municipalities would be important? What could be the role of local municipalities in implementing food chains and strategies?

Producers expect local governments to value local organic products, it would be necessary to organize procurements in parts and write the requirement of organic proportion into procurements;

If you could diversify or expand your production, what would you add to what you're currently doing with regards to school's needs?

Most of the entrepreneurs are ready to start offering additional vegetables if schools are interested, one company has thought about pig farming, one was ready to start offering juice.

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Would you be interested in organizing / participating in events related to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy. Please explain.

Entrepreneurs were open and ready to participate in organizing events and presenting their production or business, it is important for them to introduce food and agricultural knowledge and practices to the future generation.

Could you guarantee products and quantities if you know in advance that will be needed by local schools the next year?

Most are willing to make arrangements for delivery if it is economically sustainable; farms are not always ready to make binding commitments, citing the possibility that the crop may withers;

Are you interested in joining cooperatives that would have a greater opportunity to offer a variety of products and a larger quantity of them? If not, explain the problem in more detail.

Entrepreneurs are interested in cooperation if their specific interest is involved, networking and joint offers are of interest to farms;

Is there anything that you would like to add or ask? Thank you!

A specific proposal was made to continue the farmers' meetings.

Questions and answers for Stakeholders

There has been recent publicity about locally grown food. How do you define “locally grown”?

Probes: Same city, region or country? Within a specific radius? Within a day’s drive?

Local food - the closer to the place of consumption, the better, for example within the county. Also South Estonia or Estonia.

Can you tell me about your food service operation in general education schools? How do your efforts to buy locally grown food fit into the goals of your food service operation?

Previously, the local network was purchased with purchase-sale agreements, this possibility disappeared with the obligation to submit an e-invoice (currently, you cannot directly buy local products with a purchase-sale agreement). Currently, the goal in smaller schools is to get as much local raw materials as possible and to restore the network of farms. Larger schools with a procurement obligation cannot include the requirement of local food

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in the procurement, as this would be against the principles of the EU common market. Organic production requirements can be included in the tender, as this is the EU production quality standard.

Can you walk me through your procurement procedure for commercial foods?

Probes: Who are your vendors (e.g. commercial distributors, shippers, wholesalers, and farmers)? What do they offer in terms of products, services, or financial incentives? Is there a link between the needs of schools and actual local farmers in your county? Are the needs of farmers before procurement taken into consideration?

In the case of institutions with a procurement obligation, it depends on whether the school has a service or raw material procurement. In the case of raw material procurement, the main supplier of larger schools is a bulk warehouse, in the case of service procurement, a caterer with whom farms can cooperate. If there is no procurement obligation, schools have direct relationships with more active providers. In rural schools without procurement, there are several suppliers, as well as producers and farms in addition to the bulk warehouse. At the same time, small schools far from the city have limited options in the choice of suppliers, especially if there are no producers in the area, then a wholesale warehouse usually supplies.

What factors do you consider when buying locally grown food?

Probes: How important is price? Do you consider product attributes such as organic, quality, and local? Does your relationship with your vendor (including farmers) come into play?

All factors are important, the price-quality ratio is especially important, local raw materials based on trust are also used. Small schools sometimes have long working relationships with local producers.

Can you tell me about your farm to school collaboration (if any)?

Probes: How did it get started? How has it changed over the years? Do you have an educational component? Which vendors do you go to for locally grown food? Have you requested locally grown food from your broadline distributor?

Cooperation with farms works in different forms, depending on the farm for a shorter or longer time. In addition to ordering local products for the kitchen, the children go to farms to learn how to do different jobs, visit open farm days, the locals themselves have come to the school to offer their products.

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The wholesaler does not directly promote the local one, but in most cases the schools themselves know what to ask, who is the provider in their area.

What could motivate you to begin buying locally grown food? What motivates you to continue buying locally grown food?

Probes: What are the benefits of buying locally grown food?

Following nutritional requirements, it would be interesting to buy more locally, price and flexible delivery are especially important these days; the price difference is possible within the budget, it is important to offer children healthy local food, and it is equally important to protect the environment.

How has local food procurement impacted your budget, if at all?

Probes: How much do you pay for locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product) versus non-locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product)?

Currently, local farms have also brought apples for free if it's a good apple year, depending on the situation. The price of local products is mostly negotiable, and considering the market price, the price has remained within reasonable limits, so that there is enough money in the budget and we can afford to buy until the end of the school year.

What are the challenges, if any, to buying locally grown food?

Probes: How do state, or local procurement policies impact your ability to buy locally grown food, if at all?

What influence, if any, does the school board or municipal education department have on your procurement decisions? What about students, and parents?

Without procurement, schools have a relatively free hand to choose suppliers, the budget is the main limiting factor, no one directly dictates where to buy. In the case of procurement, it depends on the procurement conditions whether the wholesaler would be interested in involving local producers. According to the rules of the EU common market, preference cannot be given to local products as a criterion. Students/parents have not been directly interested in the origin of raw materials. The board of trustees of the schools has discussed the origin of the raw materials, the use of organic food in the school is in favor.

TARTU COUNTY, ESTONIA

Summary of the parent questionnaire

272 parents answered the questionnaire. Parents of all grades were represented, from 1st to 12th grade. Of the 199 respondents, the children attended two or more classes, including sometimes in different schools.

Are there enough vegetables and fruit in the school meals service?

68.4% of parents answered that fruits are offered enough, 24.2% answered that they are offered sparingly and 7.4% answered that they are offered abundantly.

Do you know who provides food and catering services at school?

In the educational institution, 152 parents or 55.9% of the survey respondents know the catering service provider, and 122 parents or 44.5% did not know the service provider.

Are you satisfied with school meals? Please comment.

Less than half of the parents (43%) answered that they were satisfied.

Reasons: because the child is happy, they are also happy; I like that there is a plant-based Tuesday program and I like that the service provider looks for local ingredients and also keeps food waste reduction important by taking leftovers to the pantry; According to the children, the food is varied.

24.3% of parents answered "rather satisfied":

In general, people are satisfied, but more reasons that are precise were also given:

In general, the child seems to be satisfied, except in cases where no responsibility is taken for his mistakes (e.g. oversalted food, I draw attention to it, and as feedback it is said that everyone ate and praised... and afterwards I also hear from the teachers that nothing was praised, it was disgusting and salty;

Child based on the comments, the food is good. Unfortunately, the main problem is that the food is not shared and no one checks how much is put on the plate and whether others are also taken into account. My son has often complained that there is no dessert or if steak is better, when he finally goes it is again exhausted and eats only bread;

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For the most part, I am satisfied, but I am not satisfied with the fact that veganism is pushed and tofu is used in the preparation of food, which children do not eat. School food should be nutritious and not leave the child with an empty stomach, for example, some strange multi-bean soup that the children did not eat at all.

Food serving was also highlighted:

And ah. In general, a varied menu, enough vegetables. Meanwhile, there are incomprehensible things like noodle soup, where children can't get the noodles. Or a chicken leg, which the children had trouble eating because they don't know how to eat it politely. Also pancakes on a tiny plate or in a bowl. But the food is generally delicious ."

The answer "don't know how to comment" was answered by 5.5%

Reasons:

Haven't tasted it, so can't comment; the child does not eat much (he wants more meat); unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to eat school food myself, the children's descriptions are different, depending on the day, sometimes they praise it, sometimes it is not suitable to eat at all.

The answer "so and so" was given by 6.3% of parents.

For example, it is justified, that I am satisfied with the lunch, but not with the long day meal; the parent is satisfied, the child is not; some days the food is good, some days not; some don't eat soup, some don't want whole grain macaroni - it depends on the food.

20.6% answered "not satisfied"

Reasons:

Highlighted: food seasoning (oversalted, unflavored, sweet), hygiene (hair in the food - mentioned 4 times), degree of doneness varies - raw potatoes and serving issues.

Sometimes I hear about food and I doubt the healthiness of that food. For example, if the food is only macaroni with white sauce; No, the potatoes are not fully cooked, there are hairs in the water, bread is only available once a week, too much soup, only salads that no one eats; There is hair in the food that comes from the kitchen workers, compliance with the requirements is questionable.

Are you involved in making meal menus?

A few parents answered that they are involved or involved in preparing the food menu.

Would you like more organic products (vegetables and fruits) in your school meals?

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66.0% of parents gave the answer "yes", 15.4% answered that "it could still be", 7.1% answered that "it is not important", 6.3% thought that the school food could rather include local products and 1.1% found that "there are enough organic products".

It was highlighted that food products should be GMO-free.

It was mentioned that it is not known where the foodstuffs come from.

For example: *Organic products are nice, but what if the caterer doesn't know how to make a delicious meal out of it?*

It was also emphasized that school food does not directly have to be organic in its entirety, because children are not offered only organic food at home either, but they do want the food to be grown locally. It was also mentioned that they would prefer organic food, but it is many times more expensive.

Are you aware of local farmers that could provide your school with organic products? Please comment.

73.5% of parents are not aware, 25.4% knew local farmers/food producers and 1.1% answered that they do not remember.

Would you support the idea of buying food from local farmers even though this could require additional money? Please comment.

83.4% answered that they would definitely support this idea, 6.3% answered that it "depends on the amount", i.e. the cost, 5.9% answered that they "do not support" and 1.1% that they partially support it.

Reasons:

Yes, I strongly support this approach. (here I will give an example from Finland, where food for kindergartens must be obtained from a radius of 50 km and only local production is allowed in the army);

Yes, I support it, but the caterer must be ready to process it in an edible way, because if the cook is poor, it doesn't matter where the raw materials come from;

Yes, I prefer to be close and support my own, but all this within reason, i.e. it makes no sense to grow something here that requires so much more additional resources than growing it in a slightly warmer place;

Yes, the idea is good. It would also be possible to pay extra money, but it depends on the amount;

If the municipality supports financially, then I support this idea;

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First of all, the local farmer should know what is expected of him. Our farm is also organic, but maybe I won't grow anything else. If I know that beetroot or carrot or pumpkin is requested from me so and so much, I would grow it. I have seen ads where Elva Services are looking for and buying raw materials. I feel that going to offer my three or four pumpkins is not enough.

Yes, I still support, but this money should still come from the state/municipality, if it is allowed that the child receives free school meals;

Certainly, but the raw material must also be of high quality. For example, carrots - unfortunately, they tend to be non-standard for home growers, and therefore their processing in kitchens is time-consuming (especially peeling).

Parents are willing to pay extra if the quality of the food also increases.

Would there be a need to create/have a farm at the disposal of the school, the production of which would supplement the school's meals?

84.4% are very in favor of cooperation when answering "yes", 6.3% could not answer, 4.1% answered no, 2.2% pointed out that it is the task of the local government and 2.5% that it is the task of the service provider.

Reasons:

No, I think multi-tasking creates chaos. Should the school itself be responsible/organize for its own food and consumers, or should the responsibility be placed on a purchased service (which I personally am not really in favor of);

It was found that this should not be the task of the school, but the task of the service provider and KOV;

Definitely. Through this, we also shorten supply chains and reduce our footprint;

The question arises, why should the school do this? Just a few years ago, the running of school canteens by schools in the city of Tartu was stopped (the provision of catering services by schools), replacing them with tenders organized by the city to find caterers and provide catering services. Will the school now have an additional obligation or who will cooperate with it? How will the necessary cooperation with the catering service provider be coordinated? There is no objection to cooperation as such.

Would you like to have cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students through direct work skills lessons and/or extracurricular activities?

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The majority of parents are in favor of students having a training base in cooperation with farmers. At the same time, it was pointed out that the study load must be taken into account. It was considered important in the elementary grades, but also in the upper school level, where students can do their research on this basis.

Reasons:

I certainly don't want to go back to the time when all school children had to do garden work. But study days at farms that offer cooperation would be really nice (certainly in the first grade). For example, kindergarten children are very happy when they have been able to go to a small farm to plant carrots in the spring and pick up the same carrots in the fall. It was also very exciting to be able to put the potatoes down and pick them up. Many children no longer have relatives in the country where they can see it. 1.-3. class would definitely participate enthusiastically in such a study day. 2nd and 3rd grade rather not;

Why not. Yes, children should know how food gets to the table and how tools and machines are used. It would be interesting to follow the growth of the plant until the fruit ripens;

I don't see the point within the lessons, it can be offered as an extracurricular activity for those interested;

With the study load of a high school student, this is not conceivable, although I am in favor of the idea. Rather, it's an elementary school topic.

What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to health education and more sustainable food consumption? Please comment.

In this matter too, most parents are convinced that it is a worthwhile idea. It was pointed out that simply visiting and observing a farm does not raise awareness. It is necessary to deal with the whole topic comprehensively and systematically.

Reasons:

Cooperation must then be directed in such a way as to teach how to use raw materials to the maximum and what can be done with food that has been left behind;

Yes for sure, we do fishing ourselves and thanks to this the child knows more about eating fish;

Yes, sure. You could look at what some schools in Setomaa municipality have done in this regard, there are quite interesting developments and lines of thinking;

Yes, if a child can feel for himself what production means, he can also value it;

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It all depends on how the meaningfulness is created. It is definitely necessary to act thoughtfully, to add facts about the current situation and why, that is, comprehensive action is necessary at all levels of education, including teacher training.

It would probably raise awareness. Students would better understand the so-called "kitchen side" of this field.

There was also a negative view:

No! Food that children like will reduce food waste. Do you really think that if you put the label "ORGANIC" on bad food, children will run to it? A silly question to be honest;

No. A larger circle of specialists must be involved to raise awareness. A farmer/food producer does not know all the details of a healthy diet - that is what people at TAI, trained nutritionists, have learned about. Farmers/food producers can explain where the food comes from and what needs to be done to get the product to the table. They cannot explain if and how much is healthy;

Reducing food waste is a wider problem and needs social involvement and empathy.

Would the cooperation with local farmers contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy? Please comment.

Most parents agree with this idea. It is mainly emphasized that awareness increases when children can participate in the process of growing food, put their hands on it and do something concrete themselves. It is also emphasized that a healthy diet is based on an appropriate menu and deliciously prepared food.

Yes, if this cooperation does not only mean anonymous delivery of food and making it a meal. Children need to be shown, explained, let them put their hands on;

If children are also involved in this activity, then definitely. Conduct so-called cooking classes for everyone, where the children themselves prepare food and can taste it and decide whether it could be on the food menu;

Rather, it is a matter of curriculum and program, which can be helped by having students visit local farms to learn about growing fruits and vegetables. "Cooperation with local farmers" alone is not enough. It would probably increase students' awareness of fruit and vegetable growing;

Eating does not increase one's understanding of how food is grown. Even a mild beetroot can kill a good amount of fat at the same time. One more time. Please make a questionnaire about what is good food. Of course, the raw materials must be neat and clean, but from there everything is in the chef's hands. If the food looks terrible and

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tastes terrible, it doesn't matter that it's organic food grown by our local farmer. At times, it feels that with this mild talk, they want to get some kind of "ticker" letter again;

No, if it is not accompanied/followed by any supporting activities from home, because home is always the biggest creator of habits and perceptions. It feels a bit like fighting windmills.

Student Questionnaire Summary

357 students from grades 7-12 answered the questionnaire. to class.

There were 81 respondents from the 7th grade, 27 from the 8th grade, 71 from the 9th grade, 29 from the 10th grade, 69 from the 11th grade, 80 from the 12th grade.

Are there enough vegetables and fruit in the school meals service?

51.3% of the students answered "there are enough vegetables and fruits", 19.9% answered "there are few vegetables and fruits", 20.7% answered "there are plenty of vegetables and fruits" and 5.6% pointed out, that "vegetables and fruits are rarely offered and the selection is limited".

Do you know who provides food and catering services at school?

51.5% of the respondents knew the school catering service provider (184).

Are you satisfied with school meals? Please comment.

33.6% answered "I am satisfied".

35.3% answered "Not satisfied".

29.1% answered "More less".

The rest belong to the response group that "does not eat at school" or rated their satisfaction at 50/50.

The answer "Not satisfied" was mainly justified by the fact that the food tastes bad, is tasteless. Not satisfied with the appearance of the food and the way the food is served.

Children want vegetables to be offered separately with their food, so they can choose the right ones for themselves. Food hygiene is not satisfied, hairs found in food are mentioned.

Children also do not like the way the food is prepared - mashed potatoes are too runny, potatoes are raw, foods are bland, pasta is overcooked. It is mentioned a couple of times that the dessert portions are small.

A couple of times it is mentioned that they do not understand what kind of food it is /... some strange cream-like thing inside the milk .../

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I don't like it and I don't go to eat, because there have been situations when there are hairs in the food, the dishes are dirty and the food is raw, I don't like the options that are prepared in the canteen

No I'm not happy, it's improved a bit lately, but it's still bad in my opinion. Meanwhile, the food is poorly prepared, i.e. raw or overcooked. The food contains many things that many people generally do not like, such as peppers, tomatoes and fish in soups. Maybe you could put them separately, or reduce their amount during meals...

Every day there should be bread and butter on the dining table and different seasonings to season the food (even a few more cups of salt if you can't do anything else). I really like it when all the salad ingredients are put separately (cabbage, cucumber, tomato, paprika), because I can choose all the quantities myself and create my own salad :)

Fruits could be more frequent, usually everyone likes them. (There may also be a larger selection of them). I also like it when tea is offered at school. It could be offered more often and perhaps a juice or morsi option could be added in between.

Menus could include more food. You could do some research on foods that are eaten more and eat them more often :)

Not satisfied because the cooks mix everything together and we have no choice about what we eat;

Not satisfied, often meals are prepared that the cooks know the students will eat and then a lot is wasted. Also, tomatoes or carrots, which are not suitable, have been added to the chicken pasta, which is loved by the children, rather the vegetables should be left aside raw;

Not satisfied. Often the food has a very disgusting taste, in good cases it is edible. There is hair in food;

No, they don't know how to make food on vegan day, they only take meat out of normal food and add beans etc.;

Not satisfied with school meals. All regular food sauces are very similar and have an unpleasant taste. The appearance is suspicious and the additives are also of poor quality. The potatoes are soft and unseasoned, the macaroni is boiled. I simply switched to vegetarian food because of the appearance, monotonous taste and variability, because it costs a little more, but the food is many times better;

There is no peace with school food, because I am very picky about what I eat and I especially do not eat these foods. I am also slow and take a long time to eat. In addition, when eating, I never want to eat because my stomach is not empty and forcefully feeding myself makes me sick;

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I don't like regular food sauces. To me, they're all gray, ugly-looking saucers piled high with weird stuff. They could definitely be made more appetizing by making them simpler. Normal goulash, chicken cream sauce, minced meat sauce;

Another strange thing is the celery inside the salad. Here, it is not the students who waste food and money, but the caterer. No non-Kardashian will willingly eat celery, so the salad is off the table. Save money on gross sauce and make WATERMELON-FETA-ARUGULA SALAD, TOMATO-ONION SALAD;

Meanwhile, side dishes such as cottage cheese-cucumber salad and stewed vegetables are also given, but these things are only given to vegetarians. Why can't such things be given to regular food eaters as well?

With the answer "More less" it was pointed out that I don't like certain foods. For example, there is little meat in the diet, he does not like fish or buckwheat dishes, etc. Not liking soups, omelets or casseroles is also mentioned.

Under the answer "I'm satisfied", it was mentioned on one occasion that there is too little time to eat. The idea that food should be simple and home-made is highlighted, experimenting with different tastes and foods is mostly not suitable for children.

Yes (it's a pity that there is very little time to eat. that's why sometimes I don't even go to eat. The pantry is full to the brim. You get your food and the school bell is already ringing for class);

Yes, the food is tasty and healthy, I don't like celery or any other strong-tasting greens in salads;

Yes. Most of the time, the food is very good. Unfortunately, for a big guy like me, the quantities are small. I eat twice as much at home. Unfortunately, it is often not allowed to take more, even if I go in the last shift of the last meal break and there is food left over;

I still don't like the fact that beans or chickpeas are put in some foods (THEY DON'T GO ANYWHERE!!!!, NT there is no place for beans in minced meat sauce!);

School meals are mostly okay. Definitely better than most schools. I really like it when we can assemble our own salad (lettuce, cucumber, carrot and tomato are separated in their own container.) I don't like how some fruits/vegetables are cut sloppily.

Regarding salads, it is pointed out that they should be as simple as possible, should not be covered with sauces and should be able to be prepared from different components.

Are you involved in making meal menus?

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Of the 357 students who answered the survey, 342 (95.2%) answered no.

One respondent pointed out that only very recently the school started a campaign where students were also given the right to speak. 9 respondents (2.5%) have answered positively that they have been involved.

On one occasion, it was mentioned that students' opinions were asked as part of the school's research work, and a sample menu was prepared based on this.

Would you like to have more organic products (vegetables, fruit etc.) in your school meals? Please comment.

37.0% of students want more organically grown products in school food, 24.4% do not directly want it, the rest of the respondents stated that they "don't care" (11.5%), 7.9% answered that they "don't know", "it doesn't matter" and 14.8% the question remained unclear.

Reasons:

Don't know what is mildly grown;

Not interested, it would rather be simply domestic production;

Not important at all. Rather, spend this money on quality development;

No, as it is much more expensive and not worth it in my opinion;

Yes, I would like to, because if I know that animals or plants are organically grown in Estonia, the quality of the food is many times better;

Yes, I would, as I personally support both healthy eating and reducing the ecological footprint, and using organic food would contribute to these goals;

Yes, because it is healthier than fruits and vegetables sprayed with poisons and it would support organic producers. Organic production is also more environmentally friendly;

As I have never researched about the roots in our school meals, I unfortunately cannot answer. It sure would be nice to know that I'm eating organic vegetables;

Organic food is more expensive and at the expense of it, tastier food could be offered instead;

I would like mildly raised meat;

I would definitely like to see more organic fruits in school meals. I myself come from a primary school in Võrumaa where organic food was offered, and the difference between the meals in relation to that is like night and day. Food used to be much tastier, more varied and gave energy for a longer period of time. Current food just provides fuel to get through the day, and since it doesn't taste good, you don't want to eat it in sufficient quantities. Of

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course, everything also depends on the preparation method, but I believe that organic food would improve the quality of school food.

It is possible that the students did not understand this question correctly, because it was mentioned several times that more meat would be needed. At the same time, it is also possible to produce meat in a mild manner, but the question did not state this and the children lack awareness.

The term GMO is introduced, and it is not possible to accurately understand whether children understand the content of GMO or not.

Are you aware of local farmers that could provide your school with organic products? Please comment.

Children (27) named a farm or company whose production they knew. The rest answered no.

The students could not tell because they were not sure how much the farmer was producing. It was thought that not in large enough quantities to sell the products.

Would you support the idea of buying food from local farmers even though this could require additional money? Please comment.

51.1% agreed to buy, 21.0% were against it and the rest answered "never mind", "doesn't matter", "can't say", "rather not" and a small part (0.9%) stated that "depends", citing the amount of additional money and the ability to pay more.

Reasons:

No, because school food does not have to be bland, if the food is simple and homemade, it is eaten more;

No, I am poor;

No, school meals should primarily be accessible to everyone, i.e. cheap:

Yes, but it doesn't help to stop global warming, because all these farmers together consume more resources, whereas if all these fruits were grown in one place, the consumption of resources would be less, thus saving the planet more;

Yes, because the local economy needs to be supported during a recession

Would there be a need to create/have a farm at the disposal of the school, the production of which would supplement the school's meals?

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The greater majority, 49.3% found that there is a need for cooperation between the school and the farms., 27.4% did not see this need and quite equal proportions could not answer. A small proportion felt that it was the caterer's job.

Reasons:

When clarifying the answer "there is no need", it was explained that, for example, if you wanted to be more environmentally friendly, it would be a considerable possibility, or it would be nice, it would be interesting.;
The idea also came up that school students do not have information about whether these foods are organic or not.

Under the "no" answer, one respondent added that they could instead emphasize the involvement of students in preparing the menus.

Among the positive respondents, the following thoughts can be highlighted:

If possible, they would prefer mild and decent production;

This would develop local farms as well as bring variety to school meals; as cooperation between them would be more beneficial for both.

There is also concern about the cost of school meals, that if it becomes more expensive, then not if you can get it for the same money that goes to "replenishment", the quantities could be increased; No. The price of school lunch must be kept as low as possible or changed to completely free for school students.

“Depends” here is a collective name for those responses that set the condition that if the quality of the food changes, support will be given; that if the price does not increase, it will be supported.

"I don't know" - the answer was based on ignorance of the needs of the school and the current status of school meals.

Would you like to have cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students through direct work skills lessons and/or extracurricular activities?

56% answered "yes", 34.2% were against it, a small part pointed out that "it would be interesting".

It was thought that it would definitely add a lot to elementary school students, but it probably wouldn't be so successful in high school.

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Under the "no" answer, it was pointed out that not outside of school, because too much school work is given; it was not possible to comment and also did not want to, it was found that there was simply no time for it.

Under the "yes" answer, it was commented, to do something yourself and then eat your own food after a long work would be very refreshing.

Produced to be exciting, useful, educational and exciting; would teach to appreciate food.

It was suggested that it be during classes; educational and beneficial for both parties; if you can drive a tractor, yes. That would be a wonderful idea. With it, you can learn to grow food in your own garden;

It would be very useful as an extension of the field of study or when learning about organic production and the food pyramid in a school curriculum.

"There is no need" was justified as follows: I don't see much sense in this, since today's society is developing in such a way that almost all such work is done by machines. I think that as time goes on, the less one has to interfere in this activity; who has such an interest, goes to the corresponding school; elementary school and high school as elective subjects.

The "depends" answer aggregates the answers that state the conditions.

For example: *I am not directly attracted to it, but if there was someone who was very attracted to me, I would like him to have this opportunity; not outside of school hours; whoever is interested, let them participate; depends on how often. Maybe not so much learning skills, but tours showing how farm food gets to the song (ie where it comes from - eg how cows are milked, where the meat comes from, what to do with the honey).*

What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to health education and more sustainable food consumption? Please comment.

51.8% agreed with the statement, 15.1% thought it was possible and 33.1% said no.

Reasons:

"No" was added, that only cooperation does not do it;

Not necessarily, because there is actually little talk about healthiness and no one is aware of what it means. In the case of school meals, more attention should be paid to whether all the main groups are covered: proteins, carbohydrates, fats (could be less). And then, based on these groups, start to observe how to use different alternatives. Healthy food is very versatile when it comes to ideas.

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The answers "don't know" and "don't believe" are also concentrated under "no", which show that awareness is low, and there is no belief that people can change, that they know what is healthy, but do not follow it.

I do not believe. If the food is badly made, even the greenest person won't put it down.

It was also pointed out that students know about the benefits of a healthy diet, but ignore them by choice, and have not noticed the waste of school food in their school environment; not necessarily, this upbringing comes from the parents.

"Possible" sums up the answers: if you see how food is made and what goes into these foods, it can make a person eat healthier; It's still possible, they are experts and could teach us about healthier eating and not wasting food.

I don't think it will significantly raise awareness of healthy eating, because we've been told about it since elementary school anyway, and if someone is more interested in it, they can learn about it on the internet.

It can raise awareness of healthier eating, but it won't reduce food waste if the food doesn't taste good. If the food becomes tastier, then food waste also decreases.

I'm not so sure about health, because the awareness would be the same as before, but by cooperating with farmers and acquiring the skills of farm work there, some would develop respect for food.

The earlier children are introduced to the farm and how food is prepared, the more consciously they will consume it.

It was pointed out that it depends on the farmer; depends if people are interested.

This would certainly broaden students' horizons, but it depends on how farm work is shown and introduced to students. This would probably help with food waste because then the students would see that someone had to do the hard work to produce that food. Probably not healthy because it doesn't change the taste of the food.

It depends on whether the farmers themselves are knowledgeable enough to explain things to the children.

Under the answer "Yes", it was mentioned that Yes! Seeing the hard and consistent work it takes to grow food, people realize that such work and effort is not worth wasting;

Yes, today's average young person has probably never been to the field and does not know how hard work it really is.;

Yes, because then students understand that hard work is behind all food;

Yes, because many children have grown up without an emphasis on quality food in their family, so new knowledge would give them perspective;

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Yes, I don't like how food goes to waste all the time;

Yes. Students would understand how much work it takes to get food to the table. This would definitely help reduce wastage.

Yes. Students would understand how much work it takes to get food to the table. This would definitely help reduce wastage.

Suggestion: Some people do not like school meals for various reasons. I can't name it, but maybe you should ask the students of the school for clarification.

Would the cooperation with local farmers contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy? Please comment.

51.0% answered positively, but 49% answered negatively, including 16.2% answered that it is possible.

"I don't believe", the reason was that habits don't change;

Do not believe. Home and school food are two different things and it wouldn't make a big difference if a student eats healthy food once a day;

I don't think that students would start eating healthier, because they already know the healthiest way to eat, and going to farms would not affect that;

If they see the entire process of growing food when they visit the farms, it would definitely increase their awareness;

I don't think so, mostly students eat what they like and they don't think about where the food was grown in the middle of the school day on an empty stomach;

I can't believe how the school food is now, I can't see the food getting any healthier than it is now if they just switch to salad or something like that;

I don't think so, because young people mostly eat what they want and what they can get quickly, because life is so fast; It would certainly increase the knowledge of how food is grown, but probably no one would start eating healthier because of it.

The negative answer was justified as follows:

No, because we don't even know that the food we eat is organic, the students are not very interested in it, the main thing is that it is tasty!!

To the "possible" answer, it was added that:

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It would probably help to raise awareness about growing food, but not about eating healthier;

If it is not a separate lecture or explanation, then no. Otherwise, students would only think of it as an increase in food prices:);

While at school, it would certainly be healthier, but at home, students will most likely continue to eat the same way they do now;

Depends on the wallet;

In the case of city vultures, there is no need to find out, because I already know;

I don't think most people will change their eating habits, but they will learn more about how food is grown;

Not much, because diet is a habit that is difficult to change. It is possible, I can only speak for myself, I would take the opportunity to learn about nutrition, but there are definitely people who wouldn't; Awareness yes, but healthiness no, many do not eat healthily.

As for the "yes" answer, it was said:

Yes, it would give students the opportunity to eat healthier at school, but I don't think it would increase their awareness of how to grow food without being interested;

Yes, because they themselves participate in this process. I have doubts about healthy eating because, let's be honest, the school can do quite a bit about it. Above all, change must start at home;

Yes, because seeing with your own eyes and touching with your hands has a completely different effect than simply reading on the Internet or hearing from someone. I am a farm girl myself and have seen everything with my own eyes and grown it with my own hands;

Yes, because then a city person would also know how difficult it is to grow food;

Certainly the awareness of growing food would increase and students would appreciate it;

If we actually knew where our food comes from and who grows it, we would definitely appreciate it more. In addition, one would not tend to take for granted the place where our food comes from;

I think that if the students could really grow something themselves, etc., awareness of the healthiness of food could be raised and there might not be so much waste in the case of self-grown food. In addition, if you learn to grow your own food at school, you can carry it on to life after school, and this way you will achieve a healthier diet, save money and hopefully waste less food.

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Suggestion : healthy food must be prepared correctly and TASTY!!!! E.g. potatoes, rice, buckwheat, pasta. less watery and OILY sauces. there are sweeteners in salads that should not be there for it to taste normal. Personally, I would offer more proteins, fresh ingredients, etc.

The School Administration Questionnaire Summary

19 people answered the questionnaire.

What type is your school in your country's education system?

Elementary school-primary school was answered 2 times, high school 8 times, elementary school 8 times, and elementary school-high school 1 time.

Where is the school located? (urban, rural school)

Among the answers were 8 representatives of rural schools and 11 representatives of urban schools.

How big is your school? (amount of students)

The smallest school had 87 students and the largest school had over 1,000 students.

What are the main documents that regulate school meals?

9 respondents did not know which documents regulate school meals.

For example:

Regulation "Health protection requirements for catering in preschool and school", cooperation agreement with caterer, school and kindergarten rules;

Tartu LV regulations and contracts with caterers;

Catering procurement documentation;

Foods for allergy sufferers and lactose intolerance.

One of the respondents marked "student ticket" as the answer, which shows that the question was not clearly understood. In Estonia, the student ticket is used in such a way that when a student goes to eat, he registers with the student ticket, that is, he informs that he was eating that day.

Who is responsible for food supplies and preparing the menu in the school?

5 respondents indicated "don't know", the rest named the caterer or indicated the name of the catering company.

What organizations provide food and catering services for your school?

7 respondents answered "don't know".

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Aniri OÜ, AS Toidutorn, Astri OÜ, Baltic Restaurants, Dussmann Eesti OÜ were named.

Do you cooperate with municipalities when planning the procurement of school catering services?

10 respondents answered that they "don't know", one respondent indicated that only in terms of PRIA support, and twice it was mentioned that caterer.

Do you get food (fruits and vegetables or other) directly from local farms?

10 respondents stated that they "don't know", the answers of the others remained unclear. On one occasion it was mentioned that milk comes from Metsavenna's farm. "Yes" was answered twice.

Is there a system to source food directly from local farmers?

9 times they answered "don't know", 3 times "yes", twice it was stated that the caterer's area of responsibility.

Are there barriers to purchasing food from local farmers? (e.g. country / region food procurement regulations, institution purchasing policies, food safety concerns, lack of local farmers from whom to purchase, lack of support from school community etc.). Please comment.

13 answers were negative, it was also mentioned that "fear of not being able to fit into the budget", one time it was mentioned " Maybe logistics. If the farmer would bring the things himself, there would be no problem ", it was stated twice that this is the responsibility of the caterer.

What are the major concerns regarding purchasing the food from local farmers? (e.g. cost, quality, safety, delivery, packaging, storage, school labour concerns, threat to current vendor relations etc.). Please comment.

"I don't know" was answered 7 times, "cost" was mentioned 5 times, logistics was brought up once and it was noted that the caterer is responsible.

What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to more sustainable and healthier meals? Why?

7 times it was found that "yes, it helps", 3 times "don't know", 4 times "maybe".

Would there be a need to create/have a farm at the disposal of the school, the production of which would supplement the school's meals?

The majority (12) favors this idea.

Would you like to try a cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students through direct work skills lessons and/or extracurricular activities?

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A little more than half agree with this idea, the others are doubtful

Would the cooperation with local farmers contribute to educational curricular? Please comment.

This idea is generally supported.

Reasons:

The curriculum could be diversified by visiting farms as part of the subject lessons to learn entrepreneurship, see the production process, etc.;

It depends on the curriculum, whether such topics that connect are included and whether there is a need for them; yes, because then it is possible to develop, for example, farming;

Yes. Practical experience fully supports the completion of the curriculum.

The question was also asked: Are we talking about children's meals or training farmers?

Would the cooperation with local farms contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy within your school community? Please comment.

10 respondents support this idea.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

The focus group interview took place on December 21, 2022 in the seminar room of the Association of Municipalities of Tartu County.

Participants:

Annemari Polikarpus, manager of Viinamärdi Farm.

Website: <https://www.viinamarditalu.ee/et>

Kadri Leetsaar - procurement specialist of the Tartu municipal government.

Krista Loog, head of SA Elva Teenused, the aim of the foundation is the organization of catering in the educational institutions of Elva municipality, primarily based on the principles of using healthy and local raw materials, and the administration, management and maintenance of the buildings and facilities of the educational institutions of Elva municipality. Website: <https://elvateenused.ee/>

Toomas Kukk, small producer, Muri Mari OÜ

Ago Kaasik, member of the Southern Estonian Food Network and small producer. The South Estonian Food Network is a cooperative organization that wants to give all people the opportunity to cover their table with nature-

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friendly, high-quality domestic vegetables, berries, bakery and dairy products. The network includes several Estonian organic farms that do not use chemical weed killers, fertilizers or insecticides. The network also includes producers of not quite organic, but still clean, hand-picked or home-made food.

Website: <https://let.ee/et/>

Sven Tobreluts, CEO of the Association of Municipalities of Tartu County.

Lea Saul, public health and safety advisor of the Association of Municipalities of Tartu County.

Kaidi Randpöld, development specialist of the Association of Municipalities of Tartu County.

Questionnaire for Farmers

What kind of produce do you grow / supply?

Toomas Kukk, a small producer, from the company Muri Mari OÜ grows apples and raspberries in an environmentally friendly way.

Ago Kaasik, the representative of the Southern Estonian Food Network (LET) explained that all vegetables and fruits that can be grown in Estonia are available in the food network. They can order products from the following food categories: fruits and vegetables, dairy products and eggs, forest products and various drinks. Ago Kaasik grows apples as a small producer.

Annemari Polikarpus - operate as a regular producer and are the only ones in Estonia to produce sheep's milk products, sheep meat is a by-product. There are more than 200 sheep in Viinamärdi Farm.

Would you be interested in growing for your local schools? Please explain.

Small producers and South Estonian Food Network are very interested in growing products for schools and kindergartens in the surrounding area.

There are enough manufacturers, but if only the price is decisive in the procurement, it is not possible for a small manufacturer to submit its offer.

Have you already supplied food to any local schools? Please explain.

The project BSR Food Coalition, subsidy contract #S002 of Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Lead partner: Klaipėda University, Lithuania.

South Estonian Food Network cooperates with OÜ LunchTime, which offers catering services in educational institutions.

Muri Mari OÜ does not cooperate with educational institutions yet, it would be possible in Luunja municipality, but it cannot offer the same low price as for imported apples.

SA Elva Teenused is very interested in buying raw materials and products from local producers.

Kadri Leetsaar points out that they would be happy to cooperate with small producers, but they do not have an overview of producers and products in the region.

What were/would be your main motivation:

Economic reasons: revenue generated through school food service sales will have impact on your incomes;

Mainly for social reasons: serving children healthy foods and educating children about agriculture. Small producers are motivated by economic reasons as well as social reasons to provide children with healthy food.

Creating additional sales opportunities for small producers ensures their sustainability, creates new jobs in rural areas, children can eat healthy food and the environmental footprint of food transport is significantly smaller.

Do you have concerns about the existing procurement system in schools when purchasing food services / facilities? Would it be a barrier for you?

The biggest obstacle is the price, pointed out the small producers and also the decision-makers, the ones conducting the procurement.

Kadri Leetsaar, procurement specialist, added that she removed from the general procurement those product groups that can be offered by local producers: apple, potato, cucumber, etc.

Kadri had talked with the producers and explained the circumstances, but when the time came to participate in the tender, these local producers did not participate.

Ago Kaasik added that participating in the tender seems scary and too bureaucratic for a small producer

As far as you know, would requirements for hygiene, insurance etc. applied for schools be a barrier for you?

Such requirements are not an obstacle.

What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers? Do you have the resources to pack or process your product according to food service specifications?

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The Southern Estonian Food Network has its own transport system, so small producers do not have to worry themselves. The requirement for food storage is to ensure a temperature between +2-5 Co.

Are you able to be flexible in working out a payment schedule to work with a school/food service provider?

Flexibility is standard. This is very much a matter of agreement. It is paid according to how much is ordered. SA Elva Teenused also makes purchase and sale agreements with small producers.

There is also flexibility regarding the price, that it is possible to offer a cheaper price, but it will still be higher than the price of imported goods, explained Ago Kaasik.

Are there any intermediary distributors that could help you to get your product from the farm to a local school?

South Estonian Food Network in cooperation with OÜ LunchTime.

The South Estonian Food Network has also wanted to cooperate with large catering service providers such as Dussmann Eesti OÜ or Baltic Restaurant Grupp, which is represented by the Daily brand, but they only follow a cheaper price. Therefore, cooperation has not been possible. Another obstacle is that large catering companies need large quantities of peeled vegetables in their work and prefer to buy in bulk from one and the same place.

What kind of support from local municipalities would be important? What could be the role of local municipalities in implementing food chains and strategies?

The role of the municipality is mainly seen as ensuring financial support.

At the same time, municipalities need information about local producers. There is a lack of information through which one could find out who produces what, the quantities, etc. At the same time, it was recognized that KOV's own specialists cannot cope with gathering such information, there is neither time nor people for it.

In Tartumaa, Tartumaa Arendusselts, a local LEADER activity group, is hiring a food network specialist, and his tasks include mapping small producers.

Another major role that the local government can play is raising awareness among chefs, educational institutions, parents and students. Krista Loog, head of SA Elva Teenused, pointed out that if the educational institution does not contribute to the promotion of healthy nutrition through lessons, it can work wonders in the kitchen, but children and parents would not understand it. We have a very good situation in kindergartens, the children eat wholesome food, but at school it changes. In educational institutions, it is very decisive who is the caterer, whether the school canteen prepares the food itself or orders it from a large company.

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The local government can also help ensure that parents are willing to pay more for school meals than they currently do, and the local government can take care of those families who belong to the risk group.

If you could diversify or expand your production, what would you add to what you're currently doing with regards to school's needs?

Small producers answered that they would not diversify their production because it is most profitable to specialize. If there is a need, for example, for pulses, then corresponding producers will appear, for whom it is easy to add to this product group, they do not need a separate investment.

They are willing to expand their production if there is demand.

Would you be interested in organizing / participating in events related to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy. Please explain.

Interview participants are interested in participating in events that value healthy eating, promote local producers, etc.

In South Estonia, there are several events where attention can be drawn to healthy eating and the preference for local food.

Annemari Polikarpus added that the events must be specific, not scattered, for a specific target group in order to ensure sales. This makes it more attractive and profitable for producers.

Could you guarantee products and quantities if you know in advance that they will be needed by local schools the next year?

The South Estonian Food Network can certainly guarantee the necessary quantities, as there are several producers/growers for each product category in the network.

The small producers found that the cooperation between them allows to ensure the necessary products and quantities, if one of the crops fails, the other can again have a very good yield

Are you interested in joining cooperatives that would have a greater opportunity to offer a variety of products and a larger quantity of them? If not, explain the problem in more detail.

Cooperation is very important. The South Estonian Food Network works.

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The participants found that there is no point in creating more cooperatives or unions, because the South Estonian Food Network is enough.

Is there anything that you would like to add or ask? Thank you!

It was jointly pointed out that it is necessary to involve the Ministry of Rural Affairs together with the Minister of Rural Affairs, Urmas Kruuse. It is necessary to cooperate with the Institute of Health Development, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, etc.

It is very important to become aware of the producers in the area in order to invite them to participate in tenders. Procurement specialists also miss the list of products, which is a seasonal product and which is not. It turned out that the Estonian Defense Forces has such a list: seasonal cucumber, out-of-season cucumber; seasonal tomato, out of season tomato. Seasonal goods are at a cheaper price.

SA Elva Teenused, Krista Loog said that caterers have a great responsibility regarding the lunch offered in educational institutions, which must be healthy, varied, balanced, etc. Parents do not have the obligation to provide food under the same conditions at home.

Questions for Stakeholders (food specialists, people in charge of decisions....)

There has been recent publicity about locally grown food. How do you define “locally grown”?

Probes: Same city, region or country? Within a specific radius? Within a day’s drive?

Since educational institutions have to purchase raw materials through procurement, the definition of locally grown food is related to the area that results from the procurement conditions, and for this a radius of 250 km.

Can you tell me about your food service operation in general education schools? How do your efforts to buy locally grown food fit into the goals of your food service operation?

The main obstacles are the price and quantities, as well as the small producer's own ability to complete the procurement procedure. The aim is to consume as much local produce as possible. It is possible to buy smaller quantities from small producers for up to EUR 40,000.

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Can you walk me through your procurement procedure for commercial foods?

Probes: Who are your vendors (e.g. commercial distributors, shippers, wholesalers, and farmers)? What do they offer in terms of products, services, or financial incentives? Is there a link between the needs of schools and actual local farmers in your county? Are the needs of farmers before procurement taken into consideration?

Kadri Leetsaar explained that he prefers to buy from local producers. Those product groups that are not grown by local producers or where it is not possible to offer the corresponding quantities, they will be procured. The good thing is that the procurement conditions can set the region where the food product must come from. It is determined by the radius - from 250 km.

SA Elva Teenused also prefers to buy raw materials locally, local potatoes are of higher quality and tastier than organic potatoes grown there brought over from Spain.

40,000 EUR can be purchased directly from the small producers.

Cooperate with small producers as much as possible.

What factors do you consider when buying locally grown food?

Probes: How important is price? Do you consider product attributes such as organic, quality, and local? Does your relationship with your vendor (including farmers) come into play?

The expectation is that they meet the standards: nitrate content, pesticide residues, etc.

The price is currently decisive, because both the local authority and the parent are not yet willing to pay more - such discussions still need to be held.

If it is possible to buy organic products locally, they prefer them. In general, a local product is preferred over a foreign organic product. At the same time, the requirement that 20% of the raw materials be organic is followed. The quality and reliability of the goods are important in the purchase decision, so it is important to know small producers.

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Can you tell me about your farm to school collaboration (if any)?

Probes: How did it get started? How has it changed over the years? Do you have an educational component?

Which vendors do you go to for locally grown food? Have you requested locally grown food from your broadline distributor?

Viinamärdi Talu cooperates with educational institutions, where students go on field trips to their farms. They also participate in an active Country Living Day and Open Farm Day, where sheep and what they do with sheep's milk are introduced.

The educational component of visiting farms is not always so clear. You pet the sheep, you understand where it lives, what it eats, but how is the sheep related to, for example, school meals, such connections remain unconfirmed.

Krista Loog and Kadri Leetsaar explained that they prefer to buy locally grown raw materials, e.g. through the South Estonian Food Network, if the network guarantees the necessary quantities.

What could motivate you to begin buying locally grown food? What motivates you to continue buying locally grown food?

Probes: What are the benefits of buying locally grown food?

Local Estonian food is more valuable than organic food grown abroad. Toomas Kukk from Muri Mari OÜ explained that, for example, apples grown in Estonia are practically mildly grown and certainly many times more environmentally friendly compared to apples grown in Poland. He sprays apple trees 4-5 times a year on average to get a better harvest, while in Poland they spray about 20 times and with mixtures that contain a lot of different components.

The use of local food in educational institutions and other institutions managed by KOV certainly has a smaller environmental footprint than the fact that food arrives here from Poland, Germany or even further.

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The advantage of local food is that we know their growers - this creates confidence that the food meets the requirements.

Locally produced food is fresher and tastier. For example, the taste of potatoes depends on the soil in which they grow and how much fertilizer is used. Over-fertilized potatoes taste bad and also look worse than processed potatoes.

How has local food procurement impacted your budget, if at all?

Probes: How much do you pay for locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product) versus non-locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product)?

It definitely affects, because the price of local small producers is higher, they cannot compete with imported food products.

SA Elva Teenused buys a local apple at the price of EUR 1.20 + VAT, while the price of a kilo of Polish apples is EUR 0.73 + VAT.

The price per kilo of imported onions is 0.30 EUR+VAT, Estonian onions are 1 EUR/kg +VAT.

What are the challenges, if any, to buying locally grown food?

Probes: How do state, or local procurement policies impact your ability to buy locally grown food, if at all?

What influence, if any, does the school board or municipal education department have on your procurement decisions? What about students, and parents?

The law on public procurement is rigid and does not favor local small producers.

Low price - a small producer cannot sell at such a low price as imported goods.

Large caterers such as Dussmann Eesti OÜ or Baltic Restaurant Grupp, represented by the Daily brand, do not buy raw materials from LET because 1) the quantities are small, 2) the price is higher and 3) they need peeled vegetables.

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Support measures for school milk and school fruits and vegetables in PRIA: 1) very rigid system in terms of reporting; 2) the proportion of milk is too large, it cannot be filled; 3) the proportion of fruit is too small, caterers pay extra to offer more fruits and vegetables.

The adoption of the regulation of the Minister of Labor and Health "Requirements for catering in children's institutions" has already been delayed for 3 years.

The price criterion has the most influence on the procurement decisions, if the municipality cannot find additional money to finance the catering, then the cost of the raw materials is the most decisive factor in the procurement conditions.

Lack of information. Decision-makers in municipalities do not know small producers, and small producers do not know what opportunities they have to sell their products.

Parents are not aware of what the school caterer has to offer on the menu (e.g. leguminous).

A nationwide list of seasonal fruits and vegetables that can be used as a basis for tender preparation.

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LATGALE REGION, LATVIA

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

What legal documents regulate procurement of food services in general education schools in your country?

Public Procurement Law - <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/287760>

Law on the Supervision of the Handling of Food - <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/47184>

Cabinet Regulation No. 172 (adopted 13 March 2012) "Regulations Regarding Nutritional Norms for Educatees of Educational Institutions, Clients of Social Care and Social Rehabilitation Institutions and Patients of Medical Treatment Institutions" - <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/245300>

Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 610 (adopted 27 December 2002) "Hygiene Requirements for Educational Institutions Implementing the General Basic Education, General Secondary Education, Vocational Basic Education, Industrial Education, or Vocational Secondary Education Programmes" - <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/69952>

Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 461 (adopted 12 August 2014) "Requirements for Food Quality Schemes, Procedures for the Implementation, Operation, Monitoring, and Control Thereof" - <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/268347>

Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 614 (adopted 10 December 2019 in Riga (prot. No. 57§ 64) "Procedures for calculating, allocating and using the funds provided for in the State budget for catering to educatees" - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/311355-kartiba-kada-aprekina-pieskir-un-izlieto-valsts-budzeta-paredzetos-lidzeklus-izglitojamo-edinasanai>

Republic of Latvia Cabinet Regulation No. 353 (adopted 20 June 2017 in Riga (prot. No. 31§ 18) "Requirements for green public procurement and procedures for their application" - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291867-prasibas-zalajam-publiskajam-iepirkumam-un-to-piemerosanas-kartiba>

Are there any national/regional documents/programs that raise the school's interest to purchase a variety of fresh local produce from local farmers?

<http://piensaugliskolai.lv/en/about/news/>

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Parents survey results – Latgale Planning region:

What grade does your child/children study in?

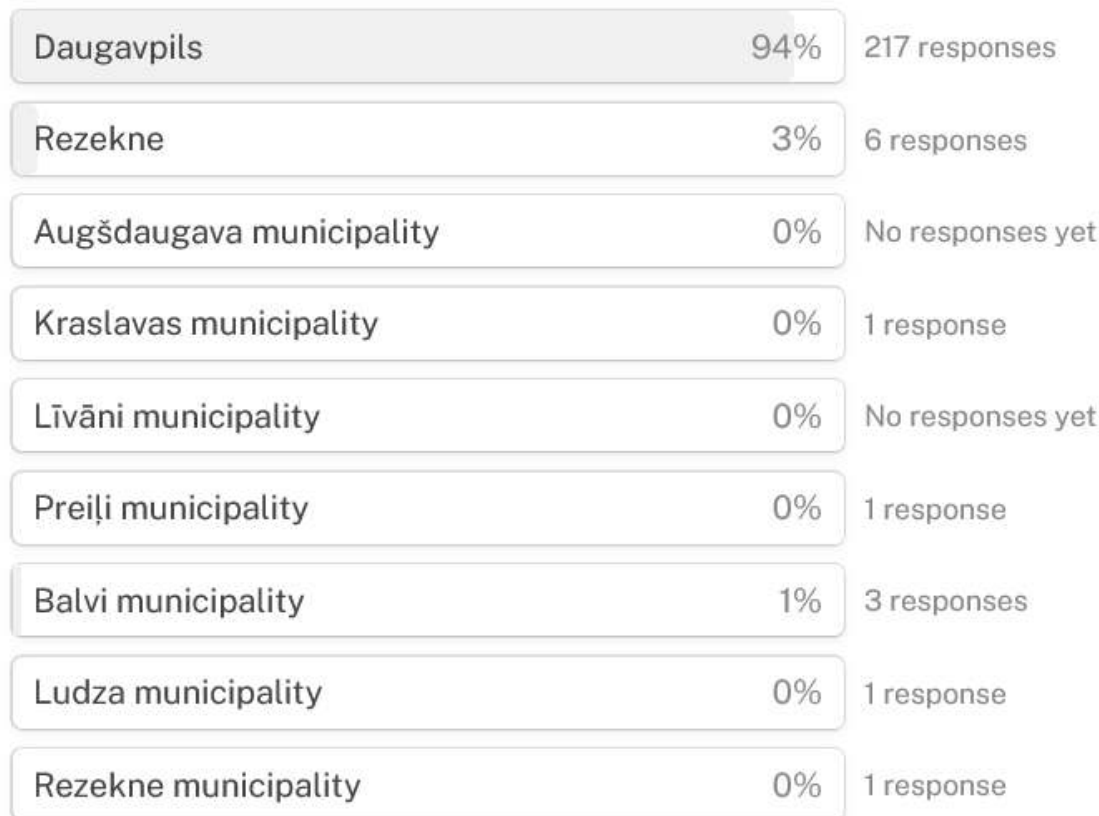
231 responses



The location of the school:

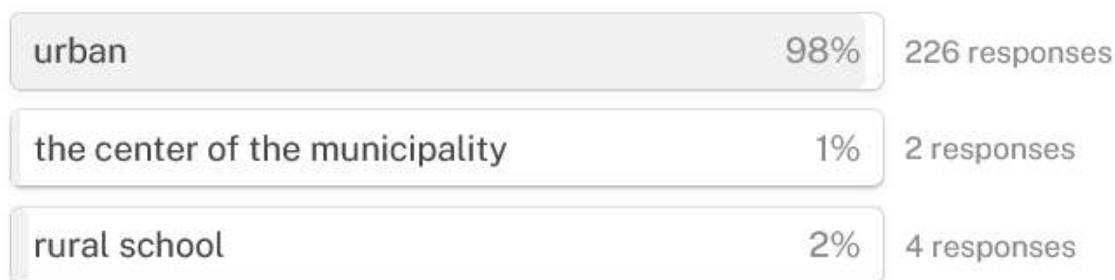
The project BSR Food Coalition, subsidy contract #S002 of Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Lead partner: Klaipeda University, Lithuania.

231 responses



The type of the school:

231 responses



Are there enough vegetables and fruit in the school meals service?

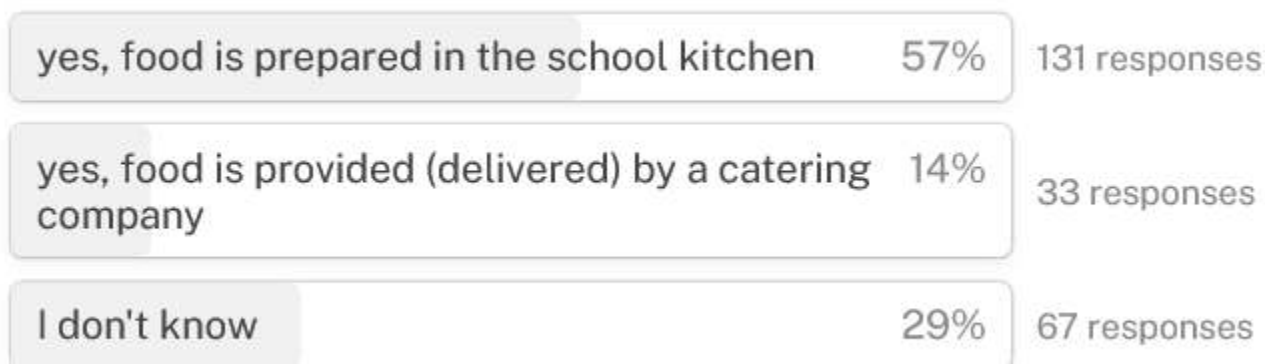
The project BSR Food Coalition, subsidy contract #S002 of Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Lead partner: Klaipėda University, Lithuania.

231 responses



Do you know who provides food and catering services at school?

231 responses



Are you involved in making meal menus?

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231 responses

yes, parents have the ability to influence the menu offered 23%

53 responses

Would you like to have more organic products (vegetables, fruit etc.) in your school meals?

231 responses

yes, definitely

70%

161 responses

would be fine, but not essential

26%

59 responses

it doesn't matter to me

4%

10 responses

Would you support the idea of buying food from local farmers even though this could require additional money?

231 responses

Yes

52%

120 responses

yes, unless the extra costs exceed 0.50EUR per day;

26%

61 responses

yes, unless the extra costs exceed 1.00EUR per day;

10%

23 responses

No

13%

29 responses

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Would there be a need to create/have a farm at the disposal of the school, the production of which would supplement the school's meals?

231 responses



Would you like to have cooperation with local farmers as a training base for students through direct work skills lessons and/or extracurricular activities?

231 responses

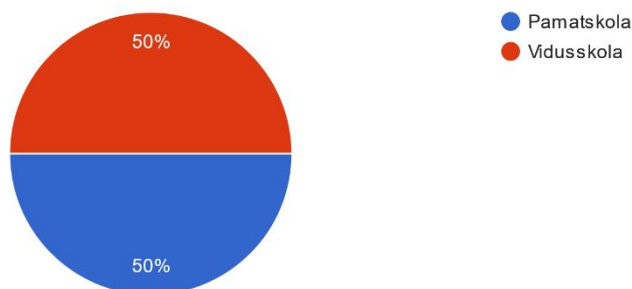


The schools' administrations survey

The project BSR Food Coalition, subsidy contract #S002 of Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Lead partner: Klaipeda University, Lithuania.

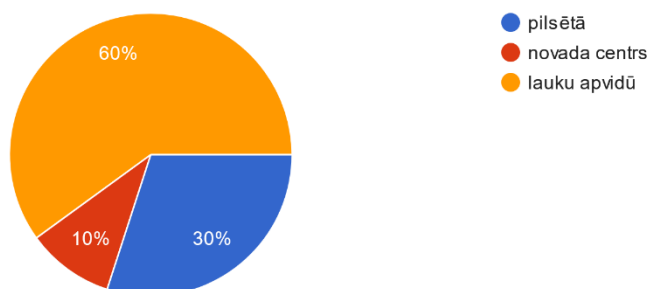
What is the type of your school in your country's educational system?

10 responses



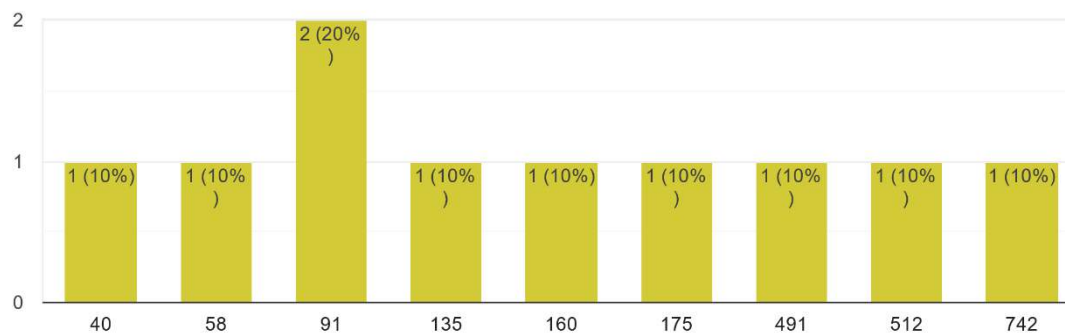
Where is the school located? (urban, rural school)

10 responses



How big is your school? (amount of students)

10 responses



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Students survey results

What grade do your study in?

83 responses



Where are you from?

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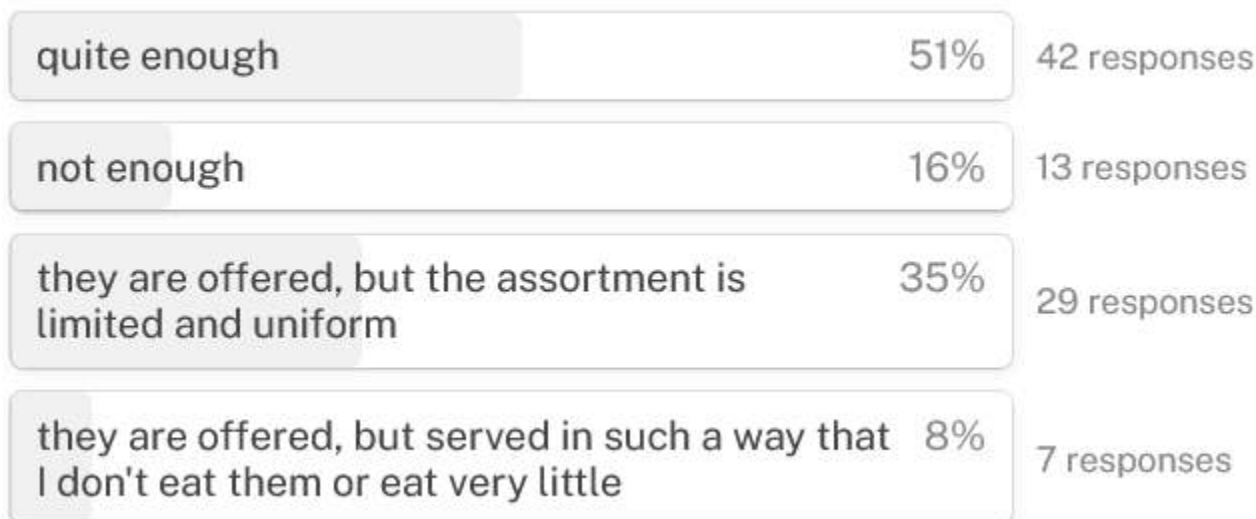
83 responses

Daugavpils	100%	83 responses
Rezekne	0%	No responses yet
Augšdaugava municipality	0%	No responses yet
Krāslava municipality	0%	No responses yet
Līvāni municipality	0%	No responses yet
Preiļi municipality	0%	No responses yet
Balvi municipality	0%	No responses yet
Ludza municipality	0%	No responses yet
Rēzekne municipality	0%	No responses yet

Are there enough vegetables and fruit in the school meals service?

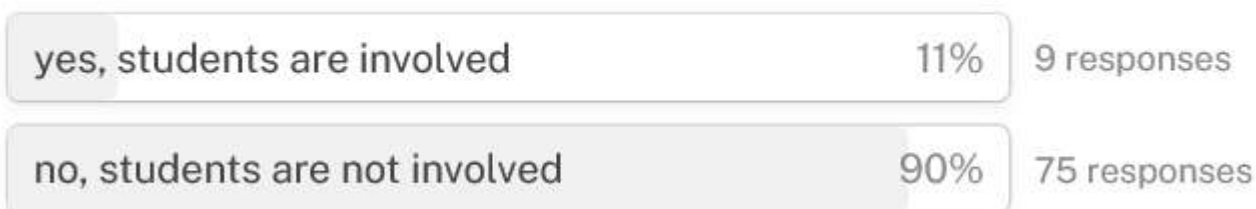
The project BSR Food Coalition, subsidy contract #S002 of Interreg Baltic Sea Region. Lead partner: Klaipeda University, Lithuania.

83 responses



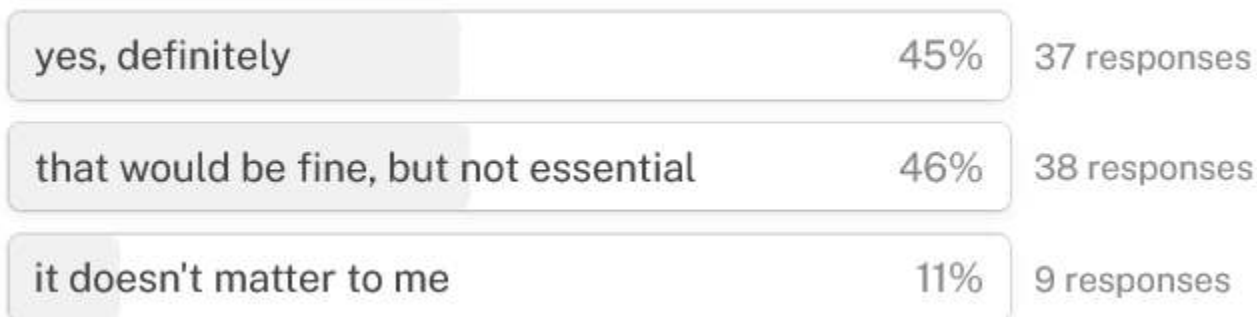
Are you involved in making meal menus?

83 responses



Would you like to have more organic products (vegetables, fruit etc.) in your school meals?

83 responses



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Would you like to go to the farm, where various vegetables or fruits are grown, and participate in various activities?

83 responses



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION RESULTS

We had 2 two meetings with the organic farmers so far:

- one was online (Zoom) with two farmers as they could not come for a meeting, but were ready to give their contribution to our project;
- another meeting was in person with one farmer.

What kind of products do you grow/supply?

Farmer 1: fruits and vegetables like apples and currants, pumpkins and tomatoes;

Farmer 2: potatoes and cereals like oats and wheat, few currants;

Farmer 3: milk products, vegetables – potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, pumpkins, zucchini, berries: currants, blackcurrants, strawberries; apples

Would you be interested in growing for your local schools? Please explain.

Farmer 1: If there is demand, then yes. Even now, we grow what the producers demand.

Farmer 2: Yes. Currently, part of the production goes to processors and another one - to our customers as food.

Farmer 3: For many schools, we could not supply as our capacity is limited. We could try for one school. We would have to change the way we work – to reduce the number of cows, and increase the amount of land we use to grow vegetables. I am afraid it takes too much time.

Have you already supplied food to any local schools? Please explain.

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Farmer 1: Yes. In 2015-2016, we produced gluten-free bread and we won the procurement. We supplied Rēzekne schools with gluten-free bread. The municipality itself approached me. It was the first year they introduced this section in procurement. They announced the competition three times, but no one applied, because few people had such experience at that time. The municipality approached me because I bake such bread for my own needs. We founded the company and applied for a procurement tender, won, and did it for one year. In the following years, we did not win because other suppliers appeared. We didn't win because we don't use preservatives, so our bread doesn't have a shelf life of 3 months, 5 months, or even longer. The most important thing for me was the quality, but the important thing in the purchase was the quantity so that it would be cheaper. I know what they give our children. And it's not the best quality. I never buy it in the store for my children. In Latvia, certain quality norms are incorporated into procurement, but it does not require that the product be organic. Nor does it take into account that organic will always be more expensive. That's why organic can never compete on price. And this is the main reason why organic farmers do not apply for procurement at all.

Farmer 2: No

Farmer 3: No

What were/would be your main motivation:

Economic reasons: revenue generated through school food service sales will have an impact on your income;

Mainly for social reasons: serving children healthy foods and educating children about agriculture.

Farmer 1: 1st of all it is the economical reason, however, we could offer cheaper prices if our products would be promoted between students and their parents if they would know a farmer whose products they eat at school and would be ready to buy our products somewhere else for a normal, higher price for their needs at home.

Farmer 2: 1st it would be one more channel to sell our products, but the other - Would give the satisfaction that with our products we help the local government, and the local region. We could even offer a cheaper price; however, it should not be too low as well.

Farmer 3: Both aspects are important for us. We chose to do farming organically because of the moral aspects at first. And economic benefits are just as an additional gain.

Do you have concerns about the existing procurement system in schools when purchasing food services/facilities? Would it be a barrier for you?

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Farmer 1: I know about Rezekne city. They announce procurement for 2 years and they buy everything for everyone in the city. After it, they give the list of products available to the schools and they have to order and cook the meals from the products on the list. I think there are so many problems in the procurement: 1. It is made by lowers, not the cooks, and the lowers have a very limited idea about products, cooking technologies, nutrition, etc.; 2. The cooks use old cooking technologies at schools and there are menus that our days' kids do not know and do not eat. And we can go on and on.

Farmer 2: I have no idea how they do it.

Farmer 3: No, I don't, however, I know we will have to register with the Food and Veterinary Service of the republic of Latvia.

As far as you know, would requirements for hygiene, insurance, etc. applied for schools be a barrier for you?

Farmer 1: I don't think so as we grow all products according to the requirements for organic farming.

Farmer 2: If you store the products according to requirements, nothing bad can happen to them. Therefore, we would have no problem ensuring high quality.

Farmer 3: I don't think so. It's all solvable.

What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers? Do you have the resources to pack or process your product according to food service specifications?

Farmer 1: We could provide our products to schools within a 50km radius in the way it is needed.

Farmer 2: We do not have any problems packing our products according to food service specifications. We already do it for our clients. There could be only one problem if we would have to bring a small number of products every day. But once, twice a week, bigger amounts it is not a problem.

Farmer 3: It is not a problem for us. We have experience. We can transport product to nearest places. We are located 5 km from Rezekne.

Are you able to be flexible in working out a payment schedule to work with a school/food service?

Farmer 1: 2-4 weeks post payment is perfectly acceptable

Farmer 2: 2-4 weeks post payment is perfectly acceptable

Farmer 3: Yes. Right now we give our products and get money after 2 weeks.

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Are there any intermediary distributors that could help you to get your product from the farm to a local school?

Farmer 1: No, and it makes our products more expensive, so we should think about short supply chains – from farm to school, is the best one.

Farmer 2: No.

Farmer 3: No

What kind of support from local municipalities would be important? What could be the role of local municipalities in implementing food chains and strategies?

Farmer 1: less bureaucracy!!! There are so many digital systems where you can get all information about all certifications etc., but we still have to print it all out and submit it to get business done. If municipalities need this information, please, get it yourself from those systems.

Farmer 2: I agree, less bureaucracy!

Farmer 3: The municipality could be an active intermediary that connects organic farms with schools. There could be a webpage where they show what is needed and farmers can register what they have.

If you could diversify or expand your production, what would you add to what you're currently doing concerning the school's needs?

Farmer 1: We have enough land to grow whatever is needed, but we have problems storing products. Right now, we grow and sell to processors directly, with no need to store anything. We could start producing greens (heated greenhouses) – spinach, zucchini, etc.

Farmer 2: It depends on the amount of the new product. Theoretically, it is possible, however, it is difficult.

Farmer 3: Yes. We have a lot of free lands.

Would you be interested in organizing/participating in events related to healthy nutrition, developing general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy? Please explain.

Farmer 1: Yes. We have space in our place for it. And we also breed horses, so it would be interesting for students to visit us and learn something new.

Farmer 2: No.

Farmer 3: Yes, we like this idea.

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Could you guarantee products and quantities if you know in advance that will be needed by local schools the next year?

Farmer 1: Yes, I think so.

Farmer 2: Yes

Farmer 3: It is difficult to guarantee quantities, but quality – for sure.

Are you interested in joining cooperatives that would have a greater opportunity to offer a variety of products and a larger quantity of them? If not, explain the problem in more detail.

Farmer 1: I don't like the idea of cooperatives. It would be better if the government would make a website where all organic farmers could register what they are ready to produce next year. The schools see the location of the farmer and can understand which products they can get from local farmers directly. But to make it work the government has to change all the way they organize procurement.

Farmer 2: I like working alone however, if it is needed, I am open to the idea to join cooperatives too.

Farmer 3: Yes, I like this idea. We are already in one of the cooperatives and we have good experience with it.

Is there anything that you would like to add or ask? Thank you!

No



KURZEME REGION, LATVIA

Questionnaire for Students\ Parents

1185 responses in total, here - first 330 responses analysed

Are you satisfied with school meals? Please comment.

Yes – 209

No – 62

Partly – 59

Some repeating comments: Buckwheat and rise are not tasty, meal is being served cold and is not delicious, portion is too small, lunch time is not good, food resembles hospital food (especially soups); buckwheat, rise and potatoes are overcooked, the same menu more than 10 years, more deserts needed, stew should be removed from the menu, cutlets and schnitzels should be fried from two sides, served food is too ordinary - nothing interesting to eat, who eats herring..., buckwheat with liver sauce is not tasty, more fruits and deserts would be welcomed, lack of spices; in the juices that are at the cashier, hair and fluff float inside on the top; too little meat, no option to choose food, more warm dishes needed; more balanced meal would be needed, according to the newest scientific studies, “gimme mac and cheese”, should be adjusted to what children eat and what they don’t eat, resembles school meals from Soviet times, too little fruit salads and vegetable; lunch is more expensive, but the choice is smaller than before; sometimes in reality the meal does not comply with the menu, too expensive, would welcome option to choose vegetables (not just take salads already mixed together), can’t serve identical portions to 1st grade and 9th grade child, menus should be with more variety

Would you like to have more organic products (vegetables, fruit etc.) in your school meals? Please comment.

Yes – 217

No – 52

Yes and no/maybe/not necessarily/doesn’t matter/specific comments – 45

Some repeating comments: Latvian yes, but not special ECO or polish, for example; no if the price rises; it doesn’t matter since non-organic products are being consumed outside school; we already eat the best what can be

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prepared for the money available, we already have good quality fruit and vegetables; children should get what they will eat, not what someone wants who himself doesn't eat there; should understand which fruit and vegetables, so that children actually eat them (they don't eat beet, for example), not necessarily organic – but local, yes, for sure;

Are you aware of local farmers that could provide your school with organic products? Please comment.

Yes – 57

No – 266

Maybe/specific comments – 7

Some repeating comments: Local farmers shouldn't necessarily be organic farmers, county survey should be carried out; in Cīrava - Dobeļu saimniecība potatoes), Aizputes dārzniecība; Ozoli – 7 (Laža parish), Eidiņi, Priekules dārzniecība (potatoes), Aizputes stādaudzētava, Šefleru saimniecība, Amaranti, Z/s Dzintari, ZS Ošenieki, ZS Birznieki; it would be more relevant for households, as not everyone will be willing to get a legal status in order to be able to sell few 100 kg of production;

Would you support the idea of buying food from local farmers even though this could require additional money? Please comment.

Yes – 155

No – 118

Maybe/specific comments – 57

Some repeating comments: the quality should be excellent in that case, depends how much, school lunch is already expensive, local farmers should be supported

What do you think - could the cooperation with local farmers contribute to health education and more sustainable consumption? Please comment.

Yes – 220

No – 23

Don't know/maybe – 81

Would the cooperation with local farmers contribute to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy? Please comment.

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Yes – 250

No – 28

Don't know/maybe – 52

Focus group discussion on 14.12.22.

A.Hauka (project researcher) comment: when talking about Green Public Procurement (GPP) in schools, it should be remembered that there are three participants - the municipality (educational institution), producers of primary (farmers) and processed (companies: milk, meat, cereals, etc.) products and catering service providers (who buy from primary and processed products manufacturers).

Information: Caterers with different forms of business participated in the focus group. For the most part, the provision of catering services is a business activity (Ltd.), which is also generally accepted and recognized. However, as there are several challenges in the GPP process and caterers are not interested in serving small and remote rural schools, the management of educational institutions has to look for other solutions. And so, in one small Kurzeme region rural school, the school staff and parents have created a non-profit organization (NGO) that provides catering services, and in another school – local residents have created a social enterprise to provide quality meals for local children.

What kind of produce do you grow / supply?

Caterers: we buy both locally produced and imported products, according to the possibilities and the market offer. According to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers no. 353 "Requirements for green public procurement and the procedure for their application" and the concluded catering contract, we provide meals with at least 20% organically certified cereal products, at least 50% organically certified dairy products, and 45% products that meet the requirements of the Latvian national food quality scheme.

What were/would be your main motivation:

- ***Economic reasons: revenue generated through school food service sales will have impact on your incomes;***
- ***Mainly for social reasons: serving children healthy foods and educating children about agriculture.***

Caterers: the motivation is more social, especially in small rural schools, because we are aware that if we do not provide this service, then no one in this school will provide such a service. We provide catering services for

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various reasons - the catering company's children study at school or as representatives of the local community we are specially approached and asked to provide these services as the only possible applicants.

Do you have concerns about the existing procurement system in schools when purchasing food services / facilities? Would it be a barrier for you?

Caterers: In small rural schools, the procurement system should be abolished, as it complicates the daily organization of school work. In small schools, which are far from regional cities, it is difficult to organize a procurement tender, because often no tenderer applies for them.

As far as you know, would requirements for hygiene, insurance etc. applied for schools be a barrier for you?

Caterers: No, it is not an obstacle, because hygiene and all other requirements related to feeding children are arranged and fulfilled. Has many years of experience in catering services.

What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers? Do you have the resources to pack or process your product according to food service specifications?

A.Hauka (project researcher) comment: Logistics procedures can be organized in different ways - either the farmer himself delivers the produce to the educational institution or the caterer drives to the farm to pick up the produce. Most often, it is possible to agree with local farmers on the delivery of products and the specified address. Pre-processing of primary production is currently the weakest part of farmers' participation in ZPI.

Are you able to be flexible in working out a payment schedule to work with a school/food service provider?

Caterers: Paying for the service is a complex issue because the caterer buys the ingredients for meals for the number of children specified in the catering contract, but the number of actual eaters is variable and unpredictable, and only those who eat pay for the service. It is a complex planning of daily food processes. We think very carefully and work on a versatile and tasty menu for children.

Are there any intermediary distributors that could help you to get your product from the farm to a local school?

Caterers: Often, the caterers of small rural schools have to cooperate with wholesale companies due to the relatively small volume of production, because direct producers refuse to supply small volumes of production directly. The usual practice is that we go to the production and production companies ourselves.

What kind of support from local municipalities would be important? What could be the role of local municipalities in implementing food chains and strategies?

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Caterers: When a contract for the procurement of catering services is concluded, the catering company enters into a lease agreement for kitchen premises and equipment with the municipality, as the owner of these premises. This year, when the prices of production resources increased rapidly due to the Russian war in Ukraine, local government rapidly increased the rent, as well as the payment for electricity, water and sewerage, according to market prices, but did not review and change the agreed purchase price of the catering service. In addition, the municipality has not invested in and modernized kitchen equipment in these small schools, and caterers have to work with old and energy-inefficient kitchen equipment. The municipality refuses to modernize the kitchen equipment, justifying it with unprofitable investments. Such cooperation puts the catering service provider in a very disadvantageous situation, and as a result, the existing caterer may also end the cooperation.

Would you be interested in organizing / participating in events related to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy. Please explain.

Caterers: yes, we are already conducting various educational events. School associations organize a school garden and harvesting, as well as other educational events.

Questionnaire for Farmers

What kind of produce do you grow / supply?

Apples, juice; grains, vegetables (potatoes, cabbages, beets, onions); buckwheat (biological); milk, honey

Would you be interested in growing for your local schools? Please explain.

Yes

Have you already supplied food to any local schools? Please explain.

Most - yes

What were/would be your main motivation:

Economic reasons: revenue generated through school food service sales will have impact on your incomes;

Mainly for social reasons: serving children healthy foods and educating children about agriculture.

Both together and each separately, mostly - economic

Do you have concerns about the existing procurement system in schools when purchasing food services / facilities? Would it be a barrier for you?

Yes, lots are being incorrectly divided (e.g. apples together with oranges and bananas)

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As far as you know, would requirements for hygiene, insurance etc. applied for schools be a barrier for you?

Vegetables, grains – no, milk - yes

What are possible logistical procedures for buying food directly from farmers? Do you have the resources to pack or process your product according to food service specifications?

Most got own mini-bus, logistics is not a problem. But some don't – transporting small quantities would not be efficient.

Got Food and Veterinary Service (FVS) certificate. A problem to mention is, e.g., packing of peeled potatoes into vacuum, because according to FVS requirements a special, separate room is needed to do this according to rules. For milk the problem is the expiration date and fat content. Too many requirements have to be fulfilled (many papers to be filled out) to follow all the rules – for a farmer with small quantities this is not efficient.

Are you able to be flexible in working out a payment schedule to work with a school/food service provider?

Yes

Are there any intermediary distributors that could help you to get your product from the farm to a local school?

In principle not needed, but cooperation is possible. Would be useful for milk, if the intermediary distributor fulfills all hygiene requirements.

What kind of support from local municipalities would be important? What could be the role of local municipalities in implementing food chains and strategies?

To correctly form the procurement 1) by lots 2) by setting priority to closest (in distance) farmers and only in cases when the farmer can't deliver the product, extend the delivery possibilities to other farmers/providers 3) take responsibility for promised/planned delivery volumes with a small certain +/- deviation 4) lay asphalt to at least key directions 5) set-up a storage room in the key town of the municipality to allow more efficient deliveries

If you could diversify or expand your production, what would you add to what you're currently doing with regards to school's needs?

Depends on demand, diversification and expanding is possible, especially in relation to maximally using the existing production (e.g., producing dried fruit from ugly/slightly damaged apples)

Would you be interested in organizing / participating in events related to healthy nutrition, develop general health habits, and agricultural and food system literacy. Please explain.

Yes, we've already been participating

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Could you guarantee products and quantities if you know in advance that will be needed by local schools the next year?

Yes, but municipalities should be responsible for the planned volumes to avoid situations when the largest part of products is not being purchased by the end of the year

Are you interested in joining cooperatives that would have a greater opportunity to offer a variety of products and a larger quantity of them? If not, explain the problem in more detail.

Yes, for production sale only and only on clear and honest cooperation principles.

Questions for Stakeholders (answers by municipality procurement specialists)

There has been recent publicity about locally grown food. How do you define “locally grown”?

Probes: Same city, region or country? Within a specific radius? Within a day’s drive?

Grown in Latvia, no matter of the distance/the respective region as close as possible to the contract (service) provision place/same city, region or country/by seasonality as well

Can you tell me about your food service operation in general education schools? How do your efforts to buy locally grown food fit into the goals of your food service operation?

There are schools where school meals are provided by catering service providers (both, by delivering ready meals to schools, as well as by preparing meals at school canteens which they rent from municipality) and there are schools where municipality buys food to ensure the operation of school canteens owned by municipalities themselves.

The procurement in both options is done according to requirements for Green Public Procurement – in one and the same manner for all schools in the county. Municipalities try to divide lots and distinguish smaller regions to allow local farmers to participate. However, there’s certain limit, as municipality can’t have contracts with 40 different farmers – it is impossible to administer such a number. Therefore no other special additional efforts are taken to buy specifically the locally grown food, as municipalities are sure that the Green Public Procurement

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rules already are the best way to ensure the participation of local farmers. Procurement specialists don't have the capacity, motivation and knowledge to go beyond the set requirements.

Can you walk me through your procurement procedure for commercial foods? Probes: Who are your vendors (e.g. commercial distributors, shippers, wholesalers, and farmers)? What do they offer in terms of products, services, or financial incentives? Is there a link between the needs of schools and actual local farmers in your county? Are the needs of farmers before procurement taken into consideration?

Both, farmers/producers, shippers and wholesalers participate in food procurements.

What do they offer in terms of products, services, or financial incentives – nothing. They can't offer any incentives, because of the procurement procedure.

Is there a link between the needs of schools and actual local farmers in your county – no.

Are the needs of farmers before procurement taken into consideration – no.

The tendency is that the price offered by shippers and wholesalers are lower than the prices offered by local farmers/producers.

The Green Public Procurement procedure - the procurement regulation stipulates that:

- 1) The food products used for ensuring the food service do not contain GMOs, do not consist of them and are not produced of them.
- 2) The applicant should submit the Products 'list according to the example provided (Annex 1) (hereinafter – OF (organic farming), NFCS, APIC products list), which contains information on products, which the applicant shall use for the provision of food services and which comply with organic farming (hereinafter – OF), national food quality scheme (hereinafter – NFCS) or agricultural products integrated cultivation (APIC) requirements.

The entrepreneur for all products included in the Products list submits both, producers and suppliers (for products, not supplied by the producer itself) affirmations. The whole product supply cycle from the producer to the applicant should be traceable.

- 3) The provision of products used in food service should comply with organic farming (OF), national food quality scheme (NFCS) or agricultural products integrated cultivation (APIC) requirements during the whole procurement contract operation period.

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4) Fruit, berry and vegetable products, which are foreseen to be used in food services, shall be supplied with the consideration of their seasonality. The entrepreneur should submit an affirmation that seasonal fruits, berries and vegetables shall be used in food service. Local fruit, berry and vegetable seasonality calendars issued by the Ministry of Agriculture should be complied with for the delivery of fruits, berries and vegetables published on Procurement Bureau's website (<https://www.iub.gov.lv/lv/partikas-piegazu-un-edinasanas-pakalpojumu-iepirkumi>)

5) The delivery of food products used in food service shall take place in not more than 250 km from the product's growing/production place till the municipality in question.

What factors do you consider when buying locally grown food?

Probes: How important is price? Do you consider product attributes such as organic, quality, and local? Does your relationship with your vendor (including farmers) come into play?

Locally grown food is the "green" food, therefore national and organic plays the role. There are some products in the Green Procurement, which have to be national, organic. The economically most efficient offer is the criterion when selecting the offers – not the cheapest price. One of the criteria is the provision of organic products, which additional points can be awarded for.

Selection criteria and their numerical values:

	Criterion	Calculation of points	Max points
C	Price – the total one year's contract price (without VAT) <i>*According to financial offer</i>	$C = C_{zem} / C_{pied} \times 50$ (C_{zem} – the lowest offered contract price for one year; C_{pied} – (the contract price of the offer in question for one year)	50
Kvalitātes kritēriji			
B	Description of the work organisation	If the description of the work organisation is not submitted – the offer is rejected.	10

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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comprehensive, detailed descriptions have been provided and they contain all information required in Annex 4, technical specification requirements have been complied with, information convinces of Applicant 's ability pārliecina to organise the food service directly at the service provision place; descriptions aompy with other sections of the offer, the documents submitted, no deficiencies spotted – 10 points to be awarded. 2. Detailed description has been provided and it contains all information volume required in Annex 4, yet there are small inaccuracies, deficiencies or description does not comply with other sections of the offer, the documents submitted – 7 points to be awarded; 3. A general, formal work organisation description has been submitted, which does not contain all information required in Annex 4, deficiencies have been spotted – 3 points to be awarded; 4. A general, formal work organisation description has been submitted, which does not relate to this procurement, as well as if significant incompliances with the technical specification requirements have been spotted – 0 points to be awarded. 	
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D	The quality of food products – products that comply with NFCS, OF or APIC requirements – NFCS, OF or APIC schemes or its products’ quality indicators compliant products used in food service	<p>Max number of points 40 shall be awarded to the applicant, which in its products list shall include most NFCS, OF or APIC products as per requirements of the procurement regulation, for other applicants the number of points shall be calculated according to the formula:</p> $D = D_{\text{vert}} / D_{\text{max}} \times 40$ <p>– max number of points set for the criterion in question;</p> <p>rt – the number of products offered by the applicant in question in the procurement subject part.</p> <p>ax – the largest number of products offered out of all applicants in the procurement subject part.</p>	40
Max number of points			100

Can you tell me about your farm to school collaboration (if any)?

Probes: How did it get started? How has it changed over the years? Do you have an educational component? Which vendors do you go to for locally grown food? Have you requested locally grown food from your broadline distributor?

Municipalities carry out an open public procurement procedure to select the service provider which provides food services, therefore most municipalities do not have any cooperation with farmers – the service providers might have.

The only existing cooperation is through the “School fruit” programme administered by the Rural Support Service, where locally grown fruits are provided.

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Or in one very small rural school, where no one applied for catering service provision in the procurement, the food service is provided by an NGO created by school parents and that NGO has cooperation with local farmers in the county (no profit is gained by NGO, they are formed just to be able to provide food service at the school at all).

But overall, local farmers can only provide small quantities and they can't qualify for participating in the procurements. And the municipality also can't have an unlimited number of lots etc. – it is impossible for them later to administer that.

What could motivate you to begin buying locally grown food? What motivates you to continue buying locally grown food?

Probes: What are the benefits of buying locally grown food?

The municipalities buy products locally grown – products grown in Latvia – according to Green Public procurement rules. The small farmers can't provide the necessary quantities, therefore there are no possibilities to motivate them. Farmers highlight that they already are dealing with numerous requirements by the Food and Veterinary Service and it is not efficient for them to store products for a longer period – it is easier for them to sell everything in autumn to wholesalers.

To be able to purchase locally grown food from farmers, local producers etc., it is necessary to foresee or stipulate that the entrepreneur which is selected for providing food services has to cooperate with suppliers of the respective region.

How has local food procurement impacted your budget, if at all?

Probes: How much do you pay for locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product) versus non-locally grown apples (or other farm-fresh product)?

Only the locally grown fruit and vegetables are being bought. Apples are bought as part of the “School fruit” programme operated by the Rural Support Service. They pay more to farmers, but can't provide any price comparison. Locally grown is definitely more expensive, however no detailed price survey is made.

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What are the challenges, if any, to buying locally grown food?

Probes: How do state, or local procurement policies impact your ability to buy locally grown food, if at all?

What influence, if any, does the school board or municipal education department have on your procurement decisions? What about students, and parents?

The cost of school meal for 1 child has to be raised, as it is in the case of “School fruit” programme operated by Rural Support Service (the price is higher and therefore more motivating for local farmers to participate in the programme).

The challenge is that the local farmer applies to participate in the procurement at all. The key problem is the quantity. One small local farmer may deliver, for example, 50kg of apples, but can’t provide 1000kg to serve all schools. E.g. South-Kurzeme municipality makes 1 procurement for 27 schools. It can’t divide procurement for each separate school due to impossibility to administer that.

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