



# Introduction

The project “BSR Food Coalition” aims to create the conditions for the emergence of the “Farm to school” model in the Baltic countries. The project is funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Program (contract #S002).

In the first step, the developed pilot projects in all partner countries were based on the created Framework system. Also helped the experience gained from the results of the overview questionnaires indicating the general situation similarities and differences in different countries and municipalities. The pilot projects in the partner countries were created according to the needs and recommendations of representatives of local administrations, schools (including students and parents), and local farmers.

Pilot projects in the development of the “Farm to school” system were carried out by:

- Association Klaipeda Region,
- Latgale Planning Region,
- Kurzeme Planning Region,
- Association of Municipalities of Tartu County,
- Development Centre of Võru County.

It should be noted that at this stage of project implementation in developing a sustainable Farm-to-School networking platform, there was continuous cooperation between all project partners. There was cooperation with BSR Food Coalition project partners: the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Office in Lithuania, the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Office in Latvia, and the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Office in Estonia, with Klaipeda University and Sustainable Gastro in collaboration.

The aim of the project was to create the conditions for the emergence of the “Farm to school” model in the Baltic Sea countries - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (1 Fig.). The initial survey in various participating countries helped to understand that these eastern Baltic countries have good foundations and motivation to create a “Farm to school” framework.



**Fig. 1.** Location of the regions: Klaipeda (Lithuania); Latgale and Kurzeme (Latvia); Tartu and Võrumaa (Estonia).

These are only the first steps of «Farm to school» framework, which had no analogues in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Therefore, the pilot projects had a fairly wide spectrum of diversity with the same goal - to create a sustainable system between school meals and local farmers that would have a very good perspective in improving children's nutrition and at the same time their health.

Each partner implements a pilot according to provided “case study” methodology. Within the framework of this project was the idea to suggest applying «soft» measures and creating an incubator model of school-small farm cooperation through education. This would help to find the strengths in organizing better cooperation between institutions in creating a system of « Farm-to-school». Each farm-to-school program should be context-specific, be a priority, and be tailored to the needs of the Baltic countries population and the capacities of the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian local municipalities. We see as one of the most important priorities of the connections between the project countries - the development of the «Farm to School» framework in priorities of European sustainability and green deal.

Partners have worked with the development of pilots: Farm to School and Education, Gardening (Edible school yards); the initiation of a pioneering Farm-to-School concept; the building of an enabling environment for sustainable Farm-to-school national and local municipalities programs. Farm-to-school education programs include various activities, such as harvest festivals, field trips, school gardens, and farmer educational visits.



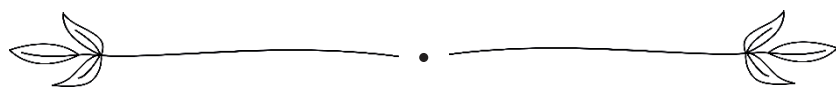
## Gratitude

We are grateful to the EU Interreg program and support of the project “BSR Food Coalition”. Because the Interreg programme in this project partners umbrella helps regional authorities cooperate on such an exceptionally important of topic of healthy children’s nutrition. Pilot projects are crucial to spreading good practices and making direct links between policymakers, school representatives, and local farmers at the regional level.



# Lithuania

## Association Klaipeda Region



### **A Case Study of the Klaipeda Region: The regional platform was adopted as the preferred model**

#### Abstract

This case study focuses on the initiation of a pioneering Farm-to-School concept in the Klaipeda region, aiming to lay the groundwork for a lasting cooperation and networking platform among regional partners. At the project's outset, the concept was relatively unfamiliar and uncommon in local municipalities. The investigation conducted during the project revealed a crucial challenge: the lack of communication and collaboration among local stakeholders. In response, the chosen pilot method for the Klaipeda region involved the creation of a networking platform to foster long-term cooperative relations, addressing the fundamental impediment to the successful implementation of the Farm-to-School initiative.

#### Problem points

The primary issue in the Klaipeda region is that many school canteens rely on external service providers who secure contracts based on the lowest price, resulting in poor food quality, children's hesitancy to eat in canteens, and various challenges associated with child nutrition.

#### Actions and methods

To address the pressing issues of poor school food quality and organizational challenges, our initiative started with comprehensive surveys within the local school communities. This involved students, school administrations, and parents, aiming to understand their perspectives on the current state of food in school canteens and the broader catering system. Simultaneously, a focus group convened regional farmers and representatives from local municipalities to unearth their insights and identify potential challenges.

Contrary to our initial assumption that the complexity of public procurement regulations was the core issue hindering local farmers' participation, the collected data revealed a different narrative. The essence of the problem lay not in intricate regulations but in the lack of human communication and collaboration among the involved parties.

In response, the Association "Klaipėdos Regionas" team developed a creative workshop model. This workshop served as a platform for local partners to acquaint themselves, understand each other's

perspectives, and engage in meaningful discussions about existing expectations and visions of collaboration. Each local municipality identified dominant challenges and collaboratively explored actions with the potential for quick results to bring about minimal changes.

Subsequently, a regional platform was adopted as the preferred model to enhance communication and cooperation among regional partners. The primary step for this platform’s development is the organization of the first Klaipeda region’s Farm-to-School Forum that will take place on December 6 (Fig. 2). This forum aims to address systemic challenges in improving the school food system through discussions and debates. Additionally, a local farmer’s fair will be integrated into the forum, also serving as a networking space where school officials can directly engage with farmers, posing relevant questions.

Anticipating that this inaugural forum will establish a positive tradition in the region, we envision an evolving discourse. Over time, as short-term issues are addressed and resolved, we aim for systemic shifts and improvements in the broader landscape of school food systems.

Achieved results

- *Initiated Discussions:* We kickstarted talks about the school food system at the regional level for the first time.
- *Identified Problems:* We clearly pinpointed existing problems and challenges.
- *Action Plan:* An action plan is ready to tackle minor problems and make improvements.
- *Systemic Changes:* We identified areas needing bigger changes and started a conversation with relevant institutions.
- *Organized Forum:* The first Farm-to-School Forum in the Klaipeda region was successfully organized.
- *Established Foundation:* We laid the foundation for a regional cooperation platform, setting the stage for ongoing collaboration.
- The regional platform was adopted as the preferred model to enhance communication and cooperation among regional partners.



Fig. 2. Photos of events (Klaipėda region, Lithuania).

# Latvia

## Kurzeme Planning Region

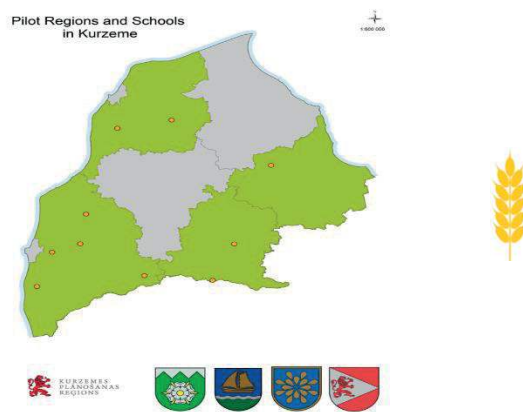


### Step 1: Headline

10 schools in Kurzeme take part in project pilot activities

### Step 2: Abstract

School meals' pilot in Kurzeme is being implemented in 4 municipalities and targets 10 schools selected on voluntary basis. The pilot covers a number of activities aimed at various target groups: master classes for school chefs, experience exchange visits between schools, sharing school menus, training on nutrition and green public procurement for municipalities, survey and promotion of local farmers and their production. With small, yet targeted steps, the pilot activities in Kurzeme aim to benefit children at pilot schools and local community around.



**Fig. 3.** Pilot regions and schools in Kurzeme, Latvia.

### Step 3: the Problem

The key problems that had been highlighted in surveys and discussions with target groups relate to complicated public procurement system in the country, insufficient capacity of municipalities to compose the procurement according to actual school needs and local farmers' offer and possibilities, need to increase state financial support for school meals, standards and regulations

to be observed by farmers in terms of requirements for food packaging, delivery, storage, quality etc., lack of efficient dialogue between the involved ministries.

#### Step 4: Strategic Approach

Pilot implementation approach and activities have been chosen and agreed upon jointly through discussions with 10 pilot schools which agreed to be part of the pilot on voluntary basis, local coordinators of 4 municipalities involved, as well as caterers and farmers – based on survey results (5 surveys had been carried out at the start of the project – for school administrators (34 respondents), school children&parents (1185 respondents), caterers (4 companies), farmers (4 farmers), municipalities (4 municipalities)), by taking into account the problems highlighted and possible actions to tackle them. As a result, it has been agreed to implement the pilot as a set of following activities: master classes for school chefs, experience exchange visits between schools, sharing of school menus, training on nutrition and green public procurement for municipalities, mapping and promotion of local farmers and their production.

#### Step 5: Showcase the Results

Until May 2024, the following pilot activities have been carried out:

- Three cooking master classes for school chefs;
- Sharing of school menus;
- Training on nutrition and green public procurement for municipalities;
- Two experience exchange visits between schools: at Z.Mauriņa Secondary School in Grobiņa and Nīca Secondary School;
- Experience exchange visit in Estonia with one municipality and two school catering company representatives from Kurzeme;
- Mapping and promotion of local farmers and their production ;
- New section of the local farmers on [www.razotskurzeme.lv](http://www.razotskurzeme.lv).

Project results for Kurzeme region were disseminated at the on-site event **Kur ir – tur aug** in Ance (Ventspils County) on 15 May 2024 .

#### Step 6: Wrap-Up and Future Directions

While implementing the pilot, it has become clear that no easy solution is possible to the complex school meals system developed over the years and the project can not immediately do any major change in the existing system. With so many players (ministries, municipalities and other stakeholders) being involved, it is important to keep efficient regular dialogue between the involved parties and find and agree on common, efficient solutions that will facilitate the presence of local food on school meals. The joint “Food Group” has been informally created by the organization



“Latvian Rural Forum”, which consists of representatives of involved ministries, Public Procurement Bureau, sector associations of food producers and farmers etc., therefore there are efforts being taken to develop a constructive dialogue and improve the system with joint efforts. In addition, an on-site meeting with the Association of Klaipeda Region and municipalities from Klaipeda Region was organized in Kurzeme in April 2024 to discuss the progress and challenges and consider the development of a further joint project on the promotion of local food under, possibly, the Interreg Latvia-Lithuania Programme.



**Fig. 4.** Photographs of the events (Latvia, Kurzeme).

What's next?

- finishing the section of the local farmers on [www.razotskurzeme.lv](http://www.razotskurzeme.lv);
- coordination with and participation in activities of other related projects and initiatives in the field: Horizon Project **Cities 2030**, Interreg Estonia-Latvia Programme Project **Green School Dining** and the Leader Programme Project **Audz's Kurzemē**, the joint “Food Group”.

# Latvia

## Latgale Planning Region



### Pilot information

The “Farm to School” program, which serves as the project’s main solution for increasing the use of locally produced organic food in school catering in the region, includes several elements. During the project, the Latgale Planning Region focused on testing the following elements of this program to determine if they are feasible and effective in the Latgale region:

- 1) **Educational field trips for students to organic farms** to improve students’ knowledge of healthy foods;
- 2) **Measures to improve the skills of school cooks** by including new recipes in school menus that make greater use of locally grown organic produce;
- 3) **Promoting the purchase of locally grown organic products for school supplies** (Green public procurement);
- 4) **International experience-sharing events** with the aim of increasing the interest and involvement of those responsible for feeding students in the Latgale region in initiating the necessary changes that would allow greater use of locally grown organic food in school catering.

To achieve this goal, a working group was formed with the participation of the Daugavpils Technological High School - Lyceum (with 53 7th grade students), the Ltd. “Mežvidi”, which provides catering in this school, the organic farm “Liepkalns”, the organic farmers’ cooperative Ekologisks.lv as a representative of the Latgale region, the employees of the central procurement department of the city of Daugavpils and a representative of the association “Green Liberty”.

For the testing of each selected “Farm to School” element, only appropriate activities were planned and organized, which made it possible to get an idea of the usefulness and sustainability of the specific element of the program and the necessity in the context of the Latgale region.

Educational field trips for students to organic farms:

- 1) In September 2023, two student trips were organized to the organic farm “Liepkalns” in the Rēzekne district. During the visit, the students toured the farm, completed various interesting, educational tasks, took part in the master class for baking waffles from organic products, listened to a lecture on healthy eating and played the game “I am an entrepreneur” (42 participants in total). The educational program of the trip was created by the owners of the farm.

link to the video: <https://ej.uz/tzi6>







The organic farm “Liepkalns” specialises in the cultivation of organic buckwheat. During the tour, the owners told the children a lot about the value of buckwheat for our bodies, why we should eat it and what minerals and vitamins it contains. A few months later, the teacher said that she had noticed that the children in the pilot class were starting to eat more buckwheat than before in the school canteen. Perhaps the visit to the farm was the trigger for such a change.

## Conclusions:



## Done so far:

The main benefits we see from incorporating this type of activity into the learning process are:

- Children learn about healthy eating and organic farming in a fun and understandable way. Consequently, the child will be able to make better food choices;
- It brings classmates together;
- it gives students an insight into the farming profession in terms of career choice;
- for organic farmers, it is another business niche and a mutually beneficial way for the state to support local growers;
- children tell parents, who may become new customers of farmers, about the organic farm experience and products.



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2) Measures to improve the skills of school cooks - two two-day master classes for school cooks of Latgale region organised in cooperation with Karlstad municipality (Sweden) (30.10. - 31.10.2023 in Daugavpils, 02.11. - 03.11.2023 in Rēzekne);

Link to the video: <https://ej.uz/pvog> - Masterclasses in Daugavpils;

The link to the video: <https://ej.uz/yent> - Masterclasses in Rezekne.



The master classes were led by:

- **Alain Grenard** - the head of the nutrition department of the Karlstad municipality;
- **Andreas Maninnerby** - the kitchen manager of Sundsta-Älvkulllegymnasiet;
- **Anton Utterström** - the kitchen manager of Fredricelundsskolan.

During the two days of the master class:

- the chefs worked in 3 groups;
- on the first day they prepared the usual Latvian school meals and looked for ways to change them;
- on the second day they prepared dishes that are popular with school children in the Karlstad region. The cooks learned many new recipes.

After the master classes, participants were asked to complete a survey and give their opinion on whether this type of master class was useful and whether they received inspiration and ideas to implement the recipes and cooking techniques learned in their workplaces. There was only positive feedback, a recommendation to organize this type of training at least once a year. In addition, several chefs shared that they use the recipes learned in schools and the children like them. A good example of how this type of master class is very useful is the example of “vegetable waffles”. It is well known that pupils tend to be lazy when it comes to eating vegetables. During the training, Alain Grenard offered a simple solution to make vegetable pancakes, which are usually disliked by students, much more attractive to them - not to bake them as pancakes in a pan, but to use a waffle mold to bake them. One of the participants implemented this suggestion in her school and the children really enjoyed eating such vegetable waffles. Therefore, even a solution as simple as changing the method of preparation and serving can bring about significant positive changes in school meals. And in this recipe, locally grown organic vegetables can be used.



## Conclusion:

It would be useful if training for school cooks became a compulsory annual event, giving school cooks the opportunity to acquire new, practical knowledge, share experiences and be inspired to incorporate new recipes, preparation and serving methods into their daily work, thereby reducing food waste and rationalising the use of organic food in food preparation.

### 3) Promoting the purchase of locally grown organic products for school supplies

On 26.01.2024, a training course for municipal procurement specialists was organized in Daugavpils on the topic of "Procurement of food and catering services for the needs of schools". 15 procurement specialists from the entire Latgale region took part.

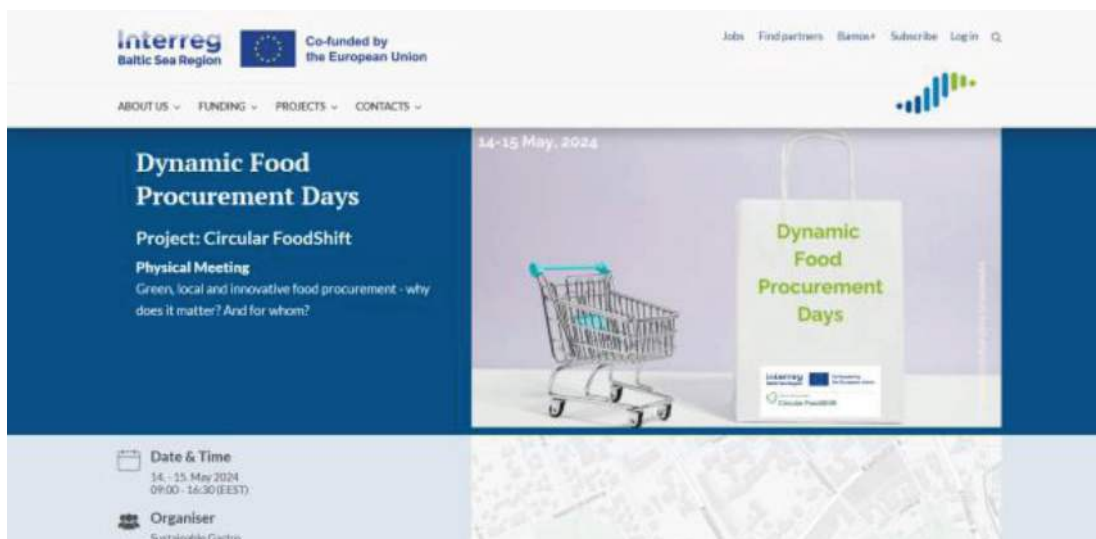
The topics of the training:

- The main differences and advantages of procuring food and procuring catering services.
- Division of the procurement object into parts, their determining factors.
- Qualification criteria for green public procurement.
- Quality criteria for food products.
- Definition of criteria for tender selection.
- An example of the content of a technical offer in the procurement of catering services (preparation of a description of the organization of work, preparation of a product list).
- Development of technical specifications for the procurement of food products (definition of the share of "green" products in the procurement; definition of the delivery period of vegetables, fruit, berries).

Link to the video <https://ej.uz/d2uu>

Participation in the event "Dynamic Food Procurement Days: Green, local and innovative food procurement - why is it important? And for whom?", organized by another Interreg BSR project "Circular FoodShift", provided a better understanding of how green public procurement is organized in other EU countries and what we can improve in Latvia. The event took place in Ukmerge, Lithuania on 14.05. - 15.05.2024.





## Conclusion:

The procurement specialists in the Latgale region who deal with the organization of school meals are knowledgeable and experienced, but there are still untapped opportunities in the field of green public procurement organization. Educational events, the exchange of international experiences and the opportunity to ask unclear questions to high-level specialists at national level in the field of green procurement can significantly improve the use of locally grown organic products in school meals.

### 4) International experience-sharing events

A conference “Farm to School programme - the wheel does not have to be reinvented twice” was organised, where the Farm to School programme was presented, how it is implemented in the municipality of Karlstadt and other topics related to school feeding. (01.11.2023 in Daugavpils, 62 participants). The program of the conference can be found here: <https://ej.uz/jvjd>

Link to the video here: <https://ej.uz/tw73>



Link to the video: <https://ej.uz/iffq>

15.04 - 18.04.2024. a trip was organised for representatives of the Latgale region to exchange experiences in the districts of Tartu and Voru in Estonia. The participants visited many schools, kindergartens and organic farms and learnt how the municipalities are working to bring as much organic food as possible into the school canteens of Tartu and Voru region. The director of Ludza City High School Gunārs Strods admitted that this trip helped to make some decisions for changes in the schools of Ludza municipality and was a valuable experience.

Link to the video here: <https://ej.uz/yo64>

## Conclusion:

The international experience of other countries can be a useful basis for changes in school feeding systems, which are so urgently needed in Latvia. The “Sweden table” and “Farm to school” programme is one of the “tools” that can also be adapted and used in Latvia.

## Summary

In the first phase of the project, when the target groups involved in the pilot project were interviewed and the current situation analysed, it became clear that a major challenge in the area of school catering is the large amount of food wastage in schools. This is because children do not eat the food served in schools. Therefore, while looking for ways to increase the proportion of organic food in school catering, the problem of food waste must also be tackled. It makes no sense to use organic food if the preparation and serving methods and recipes are the same and the food ends up in the bin. Therefore, Latgales planning region in the project focused heavily on the opportunities offered by the “Farm to School” programme in educating students and making changes to the preparation and serving of meals to reduce food waste.

Thanks to the results of testing the elements of the “Farm to School” programme, which was carried out within the framework of the BSR Food coalition Interreg project, we can conclude that the “Farm to School” programme can be useful not only at the level of the Latgale region, but at the level of the whole of Latvia. Using even one element of this programme, such as exploratory trips for students to farms or training school cooks, learning new methods of preparing and serving food, developing and implementing new recipes, can bring about significant positive changes in the school food system - improving students’ health and success, reducing food waste in school canteens, changing students’ eating habits, etc.

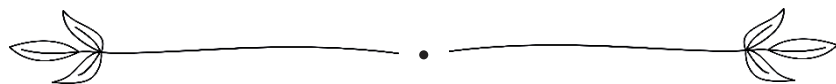
The “Farm to School” programme is about positive change in small steps.

## Online information

[https://lpr.gov.lv/lv/regionalie\\_projekti/bsr-food-coalition/](https://lpr.gov.lv/lv/regionalie_projekti/bsr-food-coalition/)

# Estonia

## Association of Municipalities of Tartu County



### Talk to the target audience!

#### Abstract

The implementation of the “Farm to School” program has not been implemented in Tartu County before.

Various activities on the topic have been carried out, such as conducting educational programs, involving local food growers and producers, but they are not dealt with comprehensively. We focus on building the BSR Food Coalition as a whole. We carry out activities to raise the awareness of target groups and increase cooperation.

#### Problem points

In the county, the Mahekeskus of the Research Centre of Organic Farming of the Estonian University of Life Sciences deals with educational programs in the key of “Farm school”. For example, they have different programs such as “Growing with your own food”, “Making a seed tape”, “Window table cucumber 2023”, etc., to teach children how to grow their own food and provide support to teachers in their teaching.

In cooperation with Mahekeskus, kindergartens and schools can offer learning integrated in subjects. The researchers of the Mahekeskus also help to build plant boxes near kindergartens and schools.

At the same time, the problem is that very few educational institutions participate in educational programs and there is little interest in the establishment of kindergartens and school vegetable gardens.

The development of the Tartu County food region is handled by the LEADER activity group Tartu County Development Association, which brings together local food producers and growers and deals with their marketing, finding cooperation opportunities and organizing experience exchange trips, etc.

The problem is that small producers do not operate in cooperation, for example as a cooperative, but each delivers separately, which is why they are not able to participate in the food procurement of educational institutions. That is why educational institutions as a possible local sales channel are closed to them.

The procurement specialists of the county municipalities have carried out food procurement according to local knowledge. Cooperation in this field has not been done before. Procuring local raw materials is difficult and requires relevant knowledge and skills.

The catering service providers of educational institutions or the kitchen staff of these institutions operate separately from the school management. The problem is that the importance of lunch in a child's school day is not valued. In many educational institutions, the cooperation between the kitchen and the school management is at a very weak level.

The role of the Association of Municipalities of Tartu County is to fill the missing gaps in the implementation of the "Farm to School" program with the project "BSR Food Coalition", which are:

- lack of awareness of how to procure local foodstuffs within the framework of public procurement.
- lack of mutual cooperation and cooperative activity of small producers.
- lack of awareness of local food growers and producers by the support staff of educational institutions and local government food procurement specialists.
- lack of caterers and kitchen staff willingness to use more local, including organic, seasonal vegetables and fruits.
- lack of willingness of educational institutions to support caterers and kitchen staff of educational institutions in their daily work.
- lack of willingness of managements of educational institutions to establish vegetable gardens near kindergartens and schools and to participate in educational programs.

The target groups are:

- municipal specialists,
- managements and employees of educational institutions,
- catering service providers for educational institutions,
- canteen staff of educational institutions.

#### Strategic Approach and Methodology

This methodology has been creating a dialogue with target groups, talking about the problem with them, looking for solutions and planning activities:

1. In terms of procuring local foodstuffs, we convened the county's procurement specialists dealing with food procurement. The purpose of the meetings has been to exchange experiences and knowledge. We also called this form of cooperation the steering group with whom we have planned activities.
2. To support the daily work of catering service providers and kitchen staff in educational institutions, we have conducted two thematic practical workshops:

- a. On September 20, 2023, a practical workshop was held on the topic «Local and organic food in educational institutions», which was attended by managers and employees of educational institutions, chefs, municipal specialists. We received input for the development of the following topics: reducing food loss and waste in the catering of educational institutions; expectations of educational institutions for local and organic producers; raising students' awareness of healthy eating; raising the awareness of caterers, the management of educational institutions and municipal specialists about healthy nutrition. We will continue to work on these topics.
  - b. On October 16, 2023, we organized a collaboration day for chefs (Fig. 7), where we talked about sustainable food systems and held a discussion. As a result, we formed a leadership group of chefs who we will involve in the preparation of development activities in the future.
  - c. On November 23, we organized a practical workshop «Reducing food waste in educational institutions». We received input for further work on the topic. A new meeting is scheduled for January 2024.
3. In order to inform the wider public and involve various parties, we organized a major event on October 10, 2023, the Southern Estonian Food Conference “Farm to School” (Fig. 8). The aim was to highlight the bottlenecks related to the implementation of the “Farm to School” program and talk about them through international experience.
  4. On December 14, 2023, we convened all county organizations that work on projects in the food sector. The Organic Center of the Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu Biotechnology Park (KISMET project, innovation network EIT Food HUB in Estonia), two different departments of the Tartu City Government, the LEADER action group Tartu County Development Association were represented. At the meeting, we got an overview of the ongoing projects. A new meeting is planned for January to jointly draw up an action plan, as the activities of the projects overlap, and to plan new activities for the following years.
  5. In September 2023, we started with the study “Mapping the catering organization and raw material volumes of educational institutions in Tartu County and the study of the availability of local raw materials”. In this framework, we will study the situation of the organization of catering in educational institutions and the mapping of the need for raw materials.

We will find out what condition and readiness the kitchens of our educational institutions are in and how big the demand for raw materials is. By studying the availability of local raw materials, we can find out who the producers are and how much food can be grown and produced.

As a result, we can prepare an action plan. To conduct the study, we applied for funding from a national program, but the idea to conduct the study arose during this project.



**Fig. 7.** Collaboration day for chefs (2023 October 16, Estonia).



**Fig. 8.** Food conference (2023 October, Estonia). © Ülle Jukk

#### Achieved results

Preparation of the study “Mapping of the organization of catering and raw material volumes of educational institutions in Tartu County and a study of the availability of local food products” in cooperation with Elen Peetsmann, head of the Research Centre of Organic Farming of the Estonian University of Life Sciences of Estonia. The preparation of the study increased the cooperation between procurement specialists of municipalities, and raised mutual awareness of various problems. The preparation has strengthened the relations between the urban and rural regions of Tartu County in this area.

We consider it most important to create a dialogue with the target groups, with whom we have met several times:

- The established management group (13 members) has met at least 7 times.
- 40 people participated in the practical workshop on October 20.
- 22 chefs participated in the chefs' cooperation day on October 16, 3 of them agreed to participate in the leadership group.
- There were 96 participants in the South Estonian food conference on October 10.
- 25 participants were in the practical workshop on November 23.

The importance and necessity of dealing with the topic has come out clearly. Stakeholders are motivated to think along and actively participate in meetings.

The activity strengthened cooperation between development organizations and food networks in Southern Estonia: Tartu Business Advisory Board, Association of Municipalities of Tartu County, Tartu Biotechnology Park, Jõgeva County Cooperation Chamber, UT Farmer´s Market, Development Center of Põlva County, Development Center of Viljandi County, Tartu Science Park, Estonian University of Life Sciences Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Polli Horticultural Research Centre, Tartu County Development Association, Development Center of Võru County, Võru County Farmers' Union/Uma Mekk, NGO Seto Küük, the Estonian Rural Tourism Association and the NGO Mulgi Small Producers Association.

Development of local and organic food agreement in cooperation with partners. Result was the thematic discussion among the leaders of Tartu county municipalities. The preparation of the agreement has been learned by managers and caterers of educational institutions who participated in the practical workshop "Local and organic food in educational institutions" held on September 20, 2023.

The activities made a connected focus on transnational cooperation. We have collaborated with Alain Grenard, who is the catering manager in Karlstad, Sweden. A cooperative contact was made through this project. We have also learned from the activities of the Latgale region, when they organized training days for cooks at the end of October 2023, then following their example, we prepared the cooperation day of cooks in the rural area of our county, which took place on October 16, 2023.

Our cooperation with the Estonian partner from Võru County has also intensified. In cooperation, we have organized and are organizing practical workshops on various topics for managers and nutritionists of educational institutions (September 20, 2023, November 23, 2023).

The Interreg program has provided the means and created an opportunity to implement the project's activities. As part of this project, we have met people from other countries that we would not have met otherwise.

## Future Directions

We consider the creation of a dialogue with target groups to be the most important method in the implementation of the "Farm to School" program.

Forming steering groups from representatives of the target groups helps to move forward with the topic. In this case, the input comes directly from the target group and activities can be planned together with them.

The result is that planned activities are implemented more easily and quickly. The planning of specific activities will remain in the new year, the last period of the project.





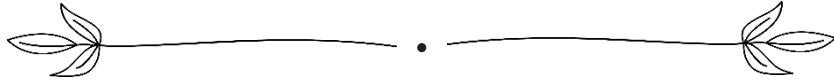
### The vision for Tartu County's food region by 2030

Tartu County is a well-known food region in Estonia and Europe. Both public and private sector caterers primarily utilize local ingredients. The production, processing, and offering of food in Tartu County stand out for their scientific basis and innovativeness. The residents of Tartu County value healthy and local food, and the food sector is characterized by unique and diverse companies and organizations. Collaboration within the food sector operates effectively, encompassing all sectors, including producers, caterers, and consumers.

Link: The Tartu County Development Association, the LEADER action group. <https://tas.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Tartumaa-toidustrateegia.pdf>

# Estonia

## Development Centre of Võru County



### Võru County as an organic region - functioning Farm to School cooperation

#### Abstract

Piloting takes place in schools and kindergartens in Võru county in Southern Estonia, there are 43 educational institutions in total. The goal of the regional strategy is to have municipalities by 2024 the use of organic raw materials of educational institutions in the food offered by at least 20 percent.

Five municipal leaders, Setomaa Union and Development Centre of Võru County signed a goodwill agreement to increase the share of organic food by 20% in 45 educational institutions by 2024 (Fig. 10).

The Võru County as an organic region - functioning Farm to School cooperation by 2024, 20-50% of the raw materials for catering in all educational institutions will be local organic raw materials. In 2020, we started three projects initiated by the Setomaa Union with 10 children's institutions with activities introducing organic catering in Võru County with the support of Leader funding. In 2022, two more Leader-funded projects and two Interreg grants started in the county to develop the topic of organic school meals.



**Fig. 10.** Five municipal leaders, Setomaa Union and Development Centre of Võru County signed a goodwill agreement to increase the share of organic food.

We offer a locality lifelong education that takes into account specificities and uniqueness.

Together with the projects, round tables for kitchens starting with organic raw materials to share experiences and, if necessary, new information, visits to other organic kitchens.

In order to introduce the raw materials to the chefs and offer new recipe ideas, training sessions were held with professional restaurant chefs on the topics of better use of organic meat, berries or vegetables, according to the plan.

To involve schools and students, organic cooking competitions were held, where the students themselves could prepare and serve food.

To introduce organic producers and products and to promote cooperation, fairs and study trips to producers take place. In addition, seminars were included with producers on various topics of organic production and cooperation.

#### Problem points

The implementation of the “Farm to School” program has not been implemented in Estonia before and the challenge is to solve the problem of availability of local organic raw materials. Among Estonian organic agricultural products, the problem is the availability of vegetables and fruits.

#### Pilot implementation and methods

Piloting takes place in schools and kindergartens in Võru county in Southern Estonia, there are 43 educational institutions in total.

The first step in dealing with the institutions involved in the process is conducting the necessary research and interviews to gain an overview of the situation in a specific location.

Target group is school chefs. School chefs are the most important because their decisions and actions bring change. In addition to school chefs, school principals, children, teachers and parents are also involved in activities in educational institutions. School chefs are the initiators of change in kitchens. But it is important to involve other named target groups in the information field and supporting activities.

A separate target group is local organic farmers and activities with them on the topics of cooperation and information exchange. Farmers are involved through various trainings, information days and study tours, which take place with the aim of improving their cooperation and knowledge.

The main goal of the pilot is, according to the agreement signed in 2020 between Võru county municipalities and development organizations:

- Organization of healthy meals in public sector-managed institutions of Võru county.

- Raising awareness of the necessity and possibilities of a healthy living environment in Võru county.
- Motivating and creating prerequisites for organic and environmentally friendly food and agricultural production in Võru County.
- Reducing the generation of food waste in the catering of institutions managed by the public sector.
- Exchange of experiences and cooperation between the parties. We are open and inclusive in planning, implementing and evaluating the results of activities.

When starting piloting in Võru county, we agreed with the organic working group on approaches and activities on how to implement changes in educational institutions. Activities were shaped by goals based on the regional strategy - by 2024, municipal educational institutions must use at least 20 percent organic raw materials in the food they offer:

- In ten pilot schools, the current situation with school cooks was mapped in terms of prices and volumes of raw materials.
- The chef and management were contacted and showed interest in the topic and possible next steps.
- The school chefs went on a study trip to organic kitchens in Tartu and Tallinn - they got an overview of the possibilities and obstacles in terms of menus, logistics, security of supply and price policy.
- A menu book with 30 organic food recipes was prepared, sample menus for the spring and autumn seasons were made separately.
- Appreciation lunch were organized for school chefs (fig. 11).
- Planned activities for different target groups were introduced in the information network of schools and kindergartens.
- Family days were organized to introduce organic food in five schools and organic food days with TV chefs: Joel Ostrat at Väraska Gymnasium and Vastseliina Gymnasium cooking lessons with Angelica Udeküll.
- In order to involve schools and students, organic cooking competitions were held, where students could prepare and serve, for example, pancakes according to their own recipes.
- Meetings were held with local organic producers and a study of the supply of organic products in Võrumaa and the region was conducted.
- Fairs were held to introduce organic producers and products and to promote cooperation.
- Study tours, seminars, information days on various topics of organic production and cooperation were organized for organic producers. 6-7 trainings with different topics, visits to farms, lectures were held per year.

In order to move forward with all schools and to fulfill the organic contract in the county, Estonian University of Life Sciences Organic Center did research and analysis to get an overview of the current situation and bottlenecks, an overview of organic raw material volumes and potential producers.

It was soon clear which activities could yield more results for the following educational institutions. Piloting with up to 10 institutions every year made it possible to offer activities that meet their needs.

1. Mapping of the situation of each institution in terms of the use of raw materials with a survey
  - form and in terms of general knowledge and technical possibilities with an on-site visit and
  - an interview with the management and kitchen team of the institution, is carried out on an
  - ongoing basis according to the joining of institutions
2. Presentation of effective experiences and opportunities to the institution's kitchen team, an organic committee to share information and basic knowledge about organic nutrition, visits to other organic kitchens and organic farms.
3. Chefs' trainings with a master chef to introduce organic raw materials and to change various recipes and menus - cooking trainings take place at least 2 times every semester
4. Roundtables for the kitchen team and management as needed on topics of active interest, roundtables on organic farming, seasonal harvesting of local organic raw materials, possibilities of making changes in menus using IT solutions, etc. take place 3-4 times per semester, mostly online.
5. One-to-one consultations according to questions arising from the use of organic raw materials or the application of the eco-label.
6. At the end of each year, the chefs' appreciation evening with an organic raw material menu offered by a master chef
7. The family days in the pilot schools for cooking organic food with parents grew into a community festival, where you could participate in practical workshops according to the topic and separately discuss the topics of sustainable food supply and environmental changes with scientists.
8. Starting from February 2023, Mahekiri (Organic letter) will be published every month with a summary of the previous month and a description of new activities with the possibility to register for them.
9. Outgoings to fairs and contact events were organized to introduce organic producers and products and to promote cooperation.

Tours to organic farms, seminars, information days on the topics of organic production and cooperation - there were 7 events with different themes according to the interests of organic producers.

Results of the Võru pilot:

- 2020 The organic agreement signed by local governments gave good motivation to initiate and implement changes in the county.
- Based on the knowledge and experience necessary for the use of local organic food, change processes have been started in all educational institutions in accordance with the agreed action scheme, which in 37 educational institutions have currently reached the goal agreed by the local government of 20% of raw materials recommended as organic locally by 2024.

The 2 larger public schools with tenders will start using organic raw materials at the level of 20% from September 2024. 3 establishments have already started to use organic raw materials in the process but have not yet reached the 20% level recognition of the catering eco-label.

- Practical cooking and round tables have supported school cooks in the process of changes.
- The prepared recipe book and seasonal menus have been additional tools to simplify the use of local organic raw materials.
- Family days have supported the process by raising awareness among students and parents.
- The Community Festival is the next step for awareness and new ideas about the important use of sustainable food in communities and in public catering.
- Further development of relations with organic producers with follow-up projects and application to the work of the South Estonian Garden Products Valorization Center, which gathers local organic products, for sustainable and successful operation of Farm-to-school.

### Future Directions

The activities of the region value those who support health choices and reduce health inequalities. The aim is to support small organic production to contribute to clean nature, clean food and organic production.

Võrumaa as an organic region - the basis for this is the cooperation between farm and school in 2024, in all educational institutions 20-50% of the catering raw materials are local organic raw materials. All municipal children's institutions continue to collect information on the topic of organic catering and plan further activities.

In order to aim for a new period in organic cooperation in Võru county, various ideas are gathered for the following agreement, which are planned to be signed. An important support for this process and for organic production in our region will be the completion of the South Estonian garden products valorization center in 2026.

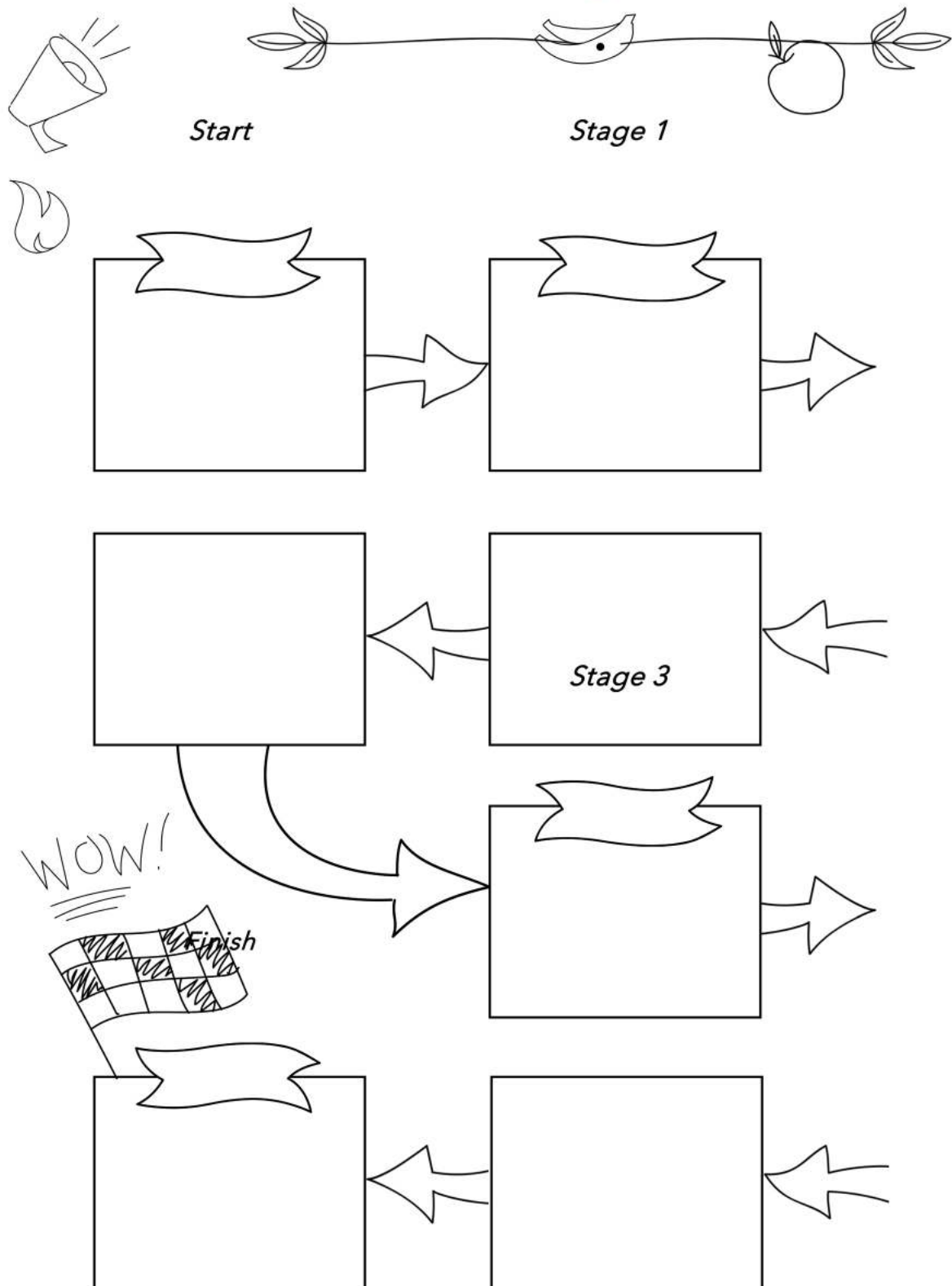


**Fig. 11.** Appreciation lunch for school cooks.

## Pilots

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lithuania</b></p> <p><b>Klaipeda region</b></p> <p>The initiation of a regional pioneering Farm-to-School concept and platform. Forming partnerships.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Estonia</b></p> <p><b>Centre of Võru County</b></p> <p>Mapping the current situation in ten pilot schools with school cooks.</p> <p>Menu book. Family days to introduce organic food.</p> <p>The activities formed the goals of regions strategy - the Võru County as an organic region</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Estonia</b></p> <p><b>Municipalities of Tartu County</b></p> <p>Development of local and organic food agreement in cooperation with partners.</p> <p>Practical workshops in the food sector.</p> <p>South Estonian food conference.</p> <p>Practical workshop "Reducing food waste in educational institutions".</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Latvia</b></p> <p><b>Kurzeme Planning Region</b></p> <p>The cooking master classes for school chefs.</p> <p>Sharing of school menus.</p> <p>Training on nutrition and green public procurement for municipalities.</p> <p>The experience exchange visits between schools.</p> <p>Survey and promotion of local farmers and their production (in process). New section of the Local farmers: <a href="http://www.razotskurzeme.lv">www.razotskurzeme.lv</a></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Latvia</b></p> <p>The student excursions to the organic farms.</p> <p>Forming partnerships.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategy of Framework</b></p> <p>The planned results are the pilots' "Farm-to-school":</p> <p>Forming partnerships</p> <p>To understand where further is needed to improve practice and assist "Farm-to-school" Framework programs in meeting their goals.</p>

**Strategy vision**





Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla

Dr. Simona Grigaliūnienė, Dr. Julija Melnikova, Dr. Inga Dailidienė  
BSR FOOD COALITION MISSION ORIENTATED FRAMEWORK  
(Elektroninis leidinys)

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Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, Herkaus Manto g. 84, 92294 Klaipėda  
Tel. (8 46) 398891, el. paštas: leidykla@ku.lt,  
interneto adresas:<http://www.ku.lt/leidykla/>