

CITY FOOD POLICIES



Geneva using territorial marketing to increase food self sufficiency and local food consumption.

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City	Geneva
Country	Switzerland
Population: city area	193.500
Population: canton area	470.512
Surface area (city/canton)	10,54 sq. km
Green areas - leisure (city)	3,10 sq. km
Surface area (canton)	282 sq. km

Among the lessons that can be learned from the Geneva case study:

- Territorial food marketing based on the implementation of territorial certification has enabled the promotion of local agriculture with the objective to increase food self-sufficiency. In such a context, public food service is a good lever to create a stable market with meaningful opportunities for producers.
- It has been of great help to extend territorial certification also to the restaurants in order to enable public buyers to overcome procurement restrictions about the indication of geographical origin of food products.
- Many years are necessary to get results; in particular, a strong effort is needed to insure local production diversification. On the other hand, staff ability to buy and use local products greatly depends on staff personal commitments and skills.
- Public Food service in Geneva is characterized by the strong involvement of civil society in the management and a century-old and still vivid perception of the social role of school meal distribution, as a tool for food justice.

Food self-sufficiency in the Canton of Geneva: an important political issue

The following declarations made by Michèle Kunzler, former State Counsellor, responsible for the Department of the Interior, of the Mobility and of the Environment illustrates the political vision of the Canton of Geneva, and the will to support local farming.

“The various food scandals of recent months have highlighted a number of abuses from food industry: the increasing distances over which products are moved as well as the number of borders and processing steps leading up before to arrive on our plates. Once again, such events allow the consumers to measure how much food traceability is important.”

“Tomorrow, the world population growth and the change of diet in Emerging countries, the increasing use of agro-fuels and the climate change will enhance food demand. In such a context, to consume mainly imported products is neither a lasting solution, neither a choice of sustainable development. Local agriculture in the France-Vaud-Geneva region must be encouraged and valued.”

The Swiss Confederation is a federal parliamentary republic bringing together 26 cantons, each one having its own constitution, its own parliament, government and courts. Switzerland has one of the best environmental records among nations in the developed world. Both confederation and cantons work together to implement sustainable development, thanks to a comprehensive series of laws that define a prescriptive environmental policy. In particular, several cantons develop labels or initiatives in order to support local agriculture.

The overall degree of food self-sufficiency in the territory of Geneva (32) 20% or 15% if one considers quantities of food or caloric needs respectively. Available agricultural areas represent about 220 m² per person in the Canton of Geneva. Geneva is the most populated city and does not have any farmland. Less than 1% of the population employed by the agricultural sector. The 450 family farms within the Canton mainly produce crops such as cereals, oilseeds, vineyards, fruits, market gardens etc.

All started with a local label to promote agriculture

In 2004, the Canton of Geneva launched a label called « Genève Région – Terre Avenir », in order to promote local food production and consumption. This project is a response to a precise political will and an overall reflection on food sovereignty over the territory. The [law « M2 05 »](#), which came into force in 2005, is based on the federal law on agriculture of 1998. It aims to foster local agriculture within the Canton of Geneva. 1,6 million € are used every year to manage and promote a regional brand. Genève Région-Terre Avenir GRTA (Geneva Region Land Future), a guarantee mark created and owned by the Canton of Geneva since 2004.

GRTA is based on four main principles: good, local, transparent and fair. Precise specifications impose the following rules:

- to produce and transform food according to integrated or organic agriculture,
- to respect applicable collective employment agreements,
- within a geographical perimeter within the canton of Geneva and neighbouring areas (zones franches).
- GRTA labeled food is GMO free and contains at least 90% local ingredients.

A technical commission decides which ingredients should be imported according to the fact that they cannot be produced in the territory of the Canton of Geneva or according to punctual climate conditions that might prevent their production in specific periods of the year. Specific controls are carried out during production process by an independent body.

The number of companies certified with GRTA label has increased since its launch, from 75 in 2004 to 345 in 2013. The notoriety of the brand has increased from 25% in 2006 up to 40% in 2013. GRTA producers are diversified (cereals, oilseeds, garden markets, grape-growing, arboriculture, horticulture, beekeeping), but also cattle, sheep, goats, horses, pigs, bisons and poultry producers, bakers, butchers, etc. There is a variety of distribution outlets: consumers can buy GRTA food products in supermarkets, wholesalers, directly in the farm, in markets etc.

To use public procurement to increase local food production

On the territory of the Canton of Geneva, public food service represents 13 millions of meals per year that are divided into several categories as shown in the figure 1. This calculation is very complex: six different directions and 45 municipalities are involved within the canton. The City of Geneva is in charge of school and nursery catering but it does not manage directly this service.

Table 1: Public food service in the Canton of Geneva: meal distribution according to the typology of service.

The Canton of Geneva	% of meals served per year
Hospitals	33
Elderly homes	25
Nurseries	9
Primary schools	15
Second. schools	3
Universities	3
Jails	4
Institutions for disabled persons	5
Other services	6

GRTA labelled products are used in many other public restaurants in the Canton of Geneva. At the end of 2013, 75 restaurants serving more than five million meals per year, either public and private, have got themselves the GRTA certification and committed to propose two or three GRTA labelled products in their menus every day. The DIME (Department of Interior, Mobility and Environment) has made a survey to quantify GRTA products consumption in school canteens. The survey was made from may 2011 to june 2012, including 16 nurseries (Espaces de Vie Enfantine) and 11 school canteens. Based on the results of this survey, public food service on the territory of the Canton of Geneva represents a potential market of about 1,4 million

€ (+/- 20%) for GRTA products. More than 120 different products were used during the study. In particular, the survey has highlighted how influent is the extent chefs feel involved and their effort and commitment to use more or less diversified food products.

The school catering in the Canton of Geneva: a civil society joint working service based on a century-old commitment for food justice.

School catering service was implemented a hundred years ago in Geneva, to support low-income population. Volunteers have been preparing lunches to children, whereas schoolteachers were bargaining their meal in exchange of pupils' supervision during lunchtime.

Today, few school kitchens created at the end of the nineteenth century still work today in a very similar way, meals being served to children by volunteers according to weekly rotations. Only 8 school restaurants out of 45 are managed by volunteer commissioners. In this case, chefs, kitchen aids, dishwashers and cleaners are employees. Since 20 years, additional school restaurants are implemented each year to cope with an increasing number of children and the municipalities of the Canton of Geneva have been delegating meal-serving inside the restaurants to an organization in charge of extra-curricular activities. Municipalities provide facilities and gives subsidies to cover part of the cost of the meals, including specific funding to buy GRTA food products ([see more](#)).

In the city of Geneva, out of 4.000 children registered in the nursery, only 50% are eating school meals and out of 11.000 children registered in the primary schools, only 4.700 take their meal at school. School catering is employing 100 staff, including 13 chefs and more than 450 volunteers.

«Croquons local» (Crunch local) in school catering and « la petite enfance croque local » (Early childhood crunch local): two pilot projects of the City of Geneva.

Since 2003, the city council has launched pilot projects to introduce organic food in school catering, starting with the bread and extending this experimentation to other organic food between May 2004 and June 2006.

Noting that a lot of organic food was imported and in front of a lukewarm reception, the municipality has decided to promote local food instead of organic food.

The "Crunch local" program in school catering matches the Aalborg goals adopted by the city of Geneva in 2010, in order to turn principles into concrete actions, and in particular it fits into the 10th objective "local economy" among the 13 priorities of the strategic plan for sustainable development implemented during the period 2011-2014 ([see more](#)). In 2010, a first experiment showed that a menu exclusively made with GRTA products, in addition to educational actions, lead to a further cost of 0.80€ per meal. Since May 2011, the city gives a support to school restaurants which propose a GRTA meal ingredient every day and a GRTA menu every month. In 2012, the annual budget devoted to the tenth objective "local economy" reached 145.000 Swiss francs , mainly to pay the extra cost of GRTA products and awareness raising initiatives within school catering.

The need to adapt public call for tenders to purchase GRTA food products in public food service.

In 2012, new specifications have been made by the general direction of agriculture in order to enable private and public catering managers willing to use the GRTA brand and foster local food purchasing procurement. They complement the general regulation of the GRTA certification. They frame the information, the supplying and the consumption of food with the GRTA label for restaurants that become active in the promotion and valorization of GRTA food as the other GRTA producers. Indeed if restaurants get themselves the GRTA certification, public buyers must follow the guidelines and serve GRTA labeled food and menu according to a frequency established by the owner of the label. Therefore,

public buyers get out of the logic of the lowest price as they commit to respect the philosophy of the GRTA label of warranty, including food traceability.

Among the main requirements: GRTA food products must be clearly identified on the menu or on the buffet table; at least 3 GRTA food products are proposed on a daily basis; in case of single menu and if there is no buffet at least two GRTA food products are served every day; the collective agreement for hotel and catering is respected; waste is sorted and recycled. The certification is valid for one year and is tacitly renewed unless withdrawal by a decision of the technical commission of the GRTA label.

A good success of GRTA label in school restaurants

The GRTA Label has met a wide acceptance from the associations of school canteens and from school catering chefs. In 2011, 70% of the schools and nurseries managed by the city were proposing a GRTA menu once a month and at least one GRTA product every day. In 2012, the percentages increased respectively to 83 and 95%. However, the data collected do not allow to assess the diversity of GRTA products served. Moreover, the creativity of chefs is strongly influencing the way GRTA are used.

For local producers, school catering is a good lever to sell their products, indeed, despite holidays, allowing a regular and steady income. However, this project is challenged by the necessity to organize small producers to enable them to fulfill school catering orders. It is also necessary to develop further the local production of pre-prepared vegetables, including fresh-cut packaged salads and frozen vegetables for school catering, in order to overcome constraints due to a seasonal offer concentrated between April and September and also to the lack of choice for some products such as fruits, dairies, starchy food, potatoes, etc.

The study made by the DIME highlights several areas of work to strengthen the project:

- To develop specific training for chefs
- To increase awareness of buyers and decision makers
- To introduce a clause regarding a minimum threshold for local products in the call for tenders for public procurement (food purchasing) and in the concession contracts awarded for the management of public catering service.
- To increase awareness of children
- To improve the visibility of GRTA products (more traceability)
- To increase the number and diversity of GRTA products served everyday
- To increase the number of collective restaurants with a GRTA certification in the city of Geneva
- To support farming, small producers' networking, foster investment to develop a GRTA offer suitable for public food service.

The implementation of a centralized and common procurement policy has become a priority. The Canton of Geneva has opted for a virtual platform that will contribute to the regional development plan by boosting local economy and enabling the match between supply and demand. It should establish a direct connection between producers and restaurants; by easing the work of purchasing managers, it should therefore increase the visibility of small producers. It covers the possibility for contracts between GRTA certified farms and close by restaurants. Moreover, by targeting production sites well adapted to the use of small volumes, it should also enable their access to the market of public food service that is usually out of reach.

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To go further:

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