

CITY FOOD POLICIES



The leverage effect of Public Food service for successful city Food Policies.

Author: Isabelle Lacourt

To implement tools for building capacity and monitoring the leverage effect for sustainable food supply chains

Basic tools are actually missing to enable cities to use the overall leverage effect of public food service within a comprehensive urban food strategy. Indeed, before starting with the commitment of public food service in the implementation of sustainable food systems, it is necessary to well understand what the public food service is. In front of the complexity and the inertia of what can be considered the largest urban restaurant if it is taken in its entirety, cities usually initiate with public food procurement measures involving public food service directly under their responsibility: schools, kindergarten, elderly homes, administrative restaurants, etc. But there are other public restaurants located in

the cities, such as universities, jails and hospitals, depend on national or regional public authorities. Even if the city is not directly involved in decision making process to manage these catering services, they impact the urban area, environmentally, economically and socially, for instance with food transportation, food waste management, local employment and various economic fall-outs.

Indeed one big asset of public food service leverage effect is the possibility to plan in advance the demand for large quantities of staple food according to the different seasons all year round. Today this demand is treated separately by all different buyers, thus missing a coordinate enforcement of purchasing power and logistics optimizing. That's why Agencies for Food Policies (see the second proposition for territorial and institutional tools) could have the specific mission to develop a mapping system that take into account several parameters such as the location of public kitchen and restaurant, highlighting all delivery points, the volume of food needed, processed and served, staff number and qualification, etc. Such deliverable would allow to support the identification and programming of measures to optimize food supply chains in large cities, by pooling of means and initiatives. Looking at the specific question of public procurement, such tool would be used as a reference to ease the coordination between different tenders and give the possibility to include eco-efficiency criteria, in particular for logistics.



The ambitious targets set for 2020 to serve 50% of sustainable food (organic or labeled) have lead the city of Paris to widen the reflection to the consolidation of the food supply chain including the facilitation of purchasing processes and the optimization of the last mile logistics. In the case of public food service related transport, several recommendations for improvement have been proposed:

- to shorten delivery times (24 hours) to warrant food freshness,
- to use vehicles with the latest Euro standard implemented,
- the optimization of delivery itineraries,
- goods delivery during off-peak hours,
- bulk supplies to reduce packaging,
- packaging recycling by suppliers.

The construction of a city food hub to allow suppliers to deliver goods in a single place and a uniform computer system to optimize the last mile delivery in the different kitchen city are under study despite they entail a major investment.

Another mission for Agencies for Food Policies could be the implementation of a standard form, for all public and private structures active in public food service sector, to be filled in with relevant information about energy and water consumption and waste production. The aim of this proposition is to expand the use of simple environmental indicators, directly related to environmental and economic performance, such as the quantity of electricity, gas, water consumed, or the quantity of waste produced in function of the number of meal prepared and/or served. The implementation of such system that rely on the use of meters and on waste separate collection would allow public food service managers, in a short term, to measure and successively to work on the optimization of the level of eco-efficiency of the services. At longer term and on a wider scale, it would engage policy makers to adapt the public procurement rules in order to increase transparency on public food services' environmental impacts.

Eco-efficiency means the possibility to create a synergic effect between environmental and economic performance. As a trivial example, we can consider that saving energy is good for the planet and also for the wallet. But if it is today very difficult to monitor environmental impacts of public food service on a routine basis, it is also very hard to perform economic analyses on such sector of activity because most of data are not available, in part because a unified system of nomenclature that fit into the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities (the NACE code in Europe, similar in function to other international Standard Industrial Classification systems) is missing. Indeed, the NACE system, revised in 2010, proposes six codes to classify food and beverage activities; public food service can be referenced in "catering activities" but it is impossible to distinguish public and private catering. Italian and French NACE system have a specific code for public food service, but it covers specifically contract catering services, leaving out all public food services directly managed by public bodies. In any case none of these codes allow to separate main sectors such as school catering from hospital catering that yet follows different logics and priorities.

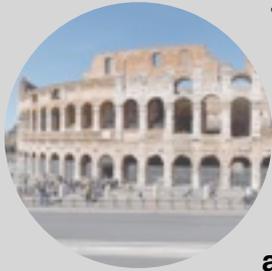
Such tool is a formal measure would have the immediate effect to allow public officials and managers to aggregate and compare economic data, also in different contexts, to perform analyses, understand the results of public investments and highlight financial impacts in terms of local economy, employment, health and other social issues in order to measure any leverage effect of public food service on the application of sustainable food policies.

To introduce more flexible rules for public procurement that allows territories adopting agriculture planning tools to increase local food production, to use public food services as a leverage to structure and support local food supply chain systems.

Public procurement rules have been created to regulate public expenditures, in particular to avoid wastage of public money and the use of a system of preference for specific groups of suppliers. In front of the complexity of such rules, big contractors tend to consolidate call for tenders in such wide procedures that are generally out of the reach of small food

they can't make a comprehensive offer to satisfy the buyer. Green public procurement (GPP) procedures allow public buyers to introduce environmental criteria to balance the rule of the "lowest bidder", but these criteria can't be readily used by local food producers to get easier access to the market of public food service.

Many local councillors and public buyers as well as managers and chefs see the interest to serve more local food in schools, hospitals, elderly houses, universities etc. and try many options to buy it despite this selection criterion does not exist: they create, for instance, specific allotments systems on the basis of local production, but these allotments increase the level of complexity of the tenders and need a strong involvement of the administrative office.



The city of Rome was the first to experiment the criterion of "guaranteed freshness" to impose perishable fruit and vegetables to be served at maximum three days after they have been harvested. Even if it does not exclude any geographical origin, it plays in favor of local producers. But its strict application means that time-consuming control procedures are set up.

capacities, quantify the offer, on a yearly basis, according to seasonal variability, and warrant local food access both to public buyers and to the other networks of distribution and retail. On the opposite this structure would also be able to quantify the demand, and therefore to inform the structures in charge of agriculture planning in order to better match offer and demand.



The case of Geneva offers an interesting input, with the creation of a territorial brand. By undertaking information, education and communication campaigns, the state of Geneva has selected producers based in a specific area, not only farmers but also food processing businesses working with local products, respecting rules of sustainability and it has advertised the interest of it for the population. The long term finality of this project is to support and maintain a local agriculture that evolves towards more sustainability by influencing the choice of the consumers. The main deliverable is a brand, to allow a large public to identify easily such products, related to technical specifications based on objective criteria. In the Geneva State, this tool can be used readily by public buyers within legal procurement procedures.

In front of this bottom-up movement, and in front of the evidence that food, affecting health, environment, is not a simple commodity, it seems logic to adapt procurement rules to increase the amount of fresh local food served in the canteens. However the prior establishment of a territorial agriculture planning system is necessary to meet the objective effectively. As most of the territories are not self-sufficient, a large demand for local food resulting from the sudden liberalization of procurement rules would necessarily reflect on the price fluctuation with negative consequences for all consumers.

A long term planning policy on agriculture is necessary to maintain a vivid activity able to attract new farmers that benefits also to the city. An observatory, based on the territory, could network all food producers, identify production

To modernize Public Food Service with new production systems and skilled staff.

Public Food service is born to substitute home-meals for people who cannot eat at home, because they are working, studying, or because they stay away, in hospitals, barracks, residences, jails, etc. Menus often use basic recipes, very similar to home cooking; but this apparent simplicity must not hide the fact that the service requires high degree of professionalism to produce and serve large quantities of food thus warranting high safety levels.

As public food service has been until now the poor relation of catering, far behind gourmet restaurants, today, the race for sustainability could be a chance to restore the status of such service and to highlight the cooking qualifications of these professional chefs required to prepare good and nutrient meals, lowering environmental impacts and with a limited budget.

Such shift of Public Food Policy towards sustainable food systems is emblematic of the cultural change good public meals may induce in the population. If the introduction of organic food often is the way to initiate a change, more generally, the modification of meal ingredients and the reduction of food wastage are two major areas of focus that drive to a deep and challenging reorganization of meal preparation, only feasible with skilled staff. Therefore the leverage of action is mainly training and education, to raise awareness of eaters with suitable education tools.

But experimenting and training is only the beginning of a longer term project in which the natural follow-up is the adequacy of kitchens and restaurants with such approach. The larger are kitchens and the stronger is the process of change they must get through to adapt and become themselves an asset of urban sustainable food systems: that is to say a place where adequately trained staff is using fresh and good quality ingredients, for the sake of supporting local food supply chains, cooking from scratch, ensuring as much as possible operational eco-efficiency to reduce simultaneously environmental impacts and costs. Cities must make the network of these new central kitchens a tool to produce good quality meals, in all the neighborhoods, at a reasonable

price, also available for the most vulnerable population groups, finding new solutions to use it full time, such as Restaurants Emeraudes in Paris.

A careful reflection is required to evaluate the right dimension, suitable for sufficient levels of mass production, without excessive standardization and industrialization process.



The House of Food in Copenhagen is a perfect demonstration of such a trend of evolution. The city has created a training centre, to teach chefs how to cook with better and more expensive foodstuffs (mainly organic) to prepare healthy and balanced meals without any increase in the budget. This challenging equation has been solved mainly by improving the knowledge of staff, empowered to cook from scratch and with innovative menus, in order to balance animal and vegetal protein intakes. This project also highlights the important educational role of public food service, especially in schools. The city addresses a difficult challenge because numerous children do not eat school meals. Despite it, the city still identifies schools as a good vector to raise awareness, acting as good role model and seeks to make children and teenagers protagonists under staff supervision: doing so, it adds a new attractive and challenging area of competence to Public Food Service.