Sustainable public procurement as a leverage for food systems sustainability

Criteria and best practices at EU level

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COREnet Advisinar – Public procurement for schools and the role of SFSCs
Online, 21 September 2026

European Commission

EU Food consumption footprint
per capita

+12%

(2010-2023)

130kg

Food waste per person in the EU

(2023)

33%

of **EU GHG emissions** come from **food sectors**

(2023)

Share of population **unable to afford a healthy diet** ranges **up to**

52%

across the EU Member States

(2024)

52%

of EU adults are **overweight**

(2022)

SUGAR

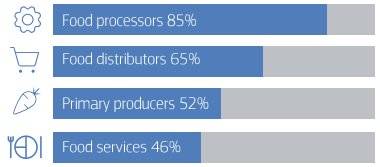
Food consumer **price inflation** in the EU peaked in December 2022, ranging from **11%** to **50%** across Member States

The **EU trade balance** has quadrupled since 2011 up to **EUR 43 billion**

(2024)

Salary in food sectors compared to the total EU economy

(2022)



9%

of **employees** in the EU work in the **food sectors**

(2024)

AI

12%

of EU food enterprises **use AI technology**

(2025)

Sustainably exploited **fish stocks** in the EU **rising to**

61%

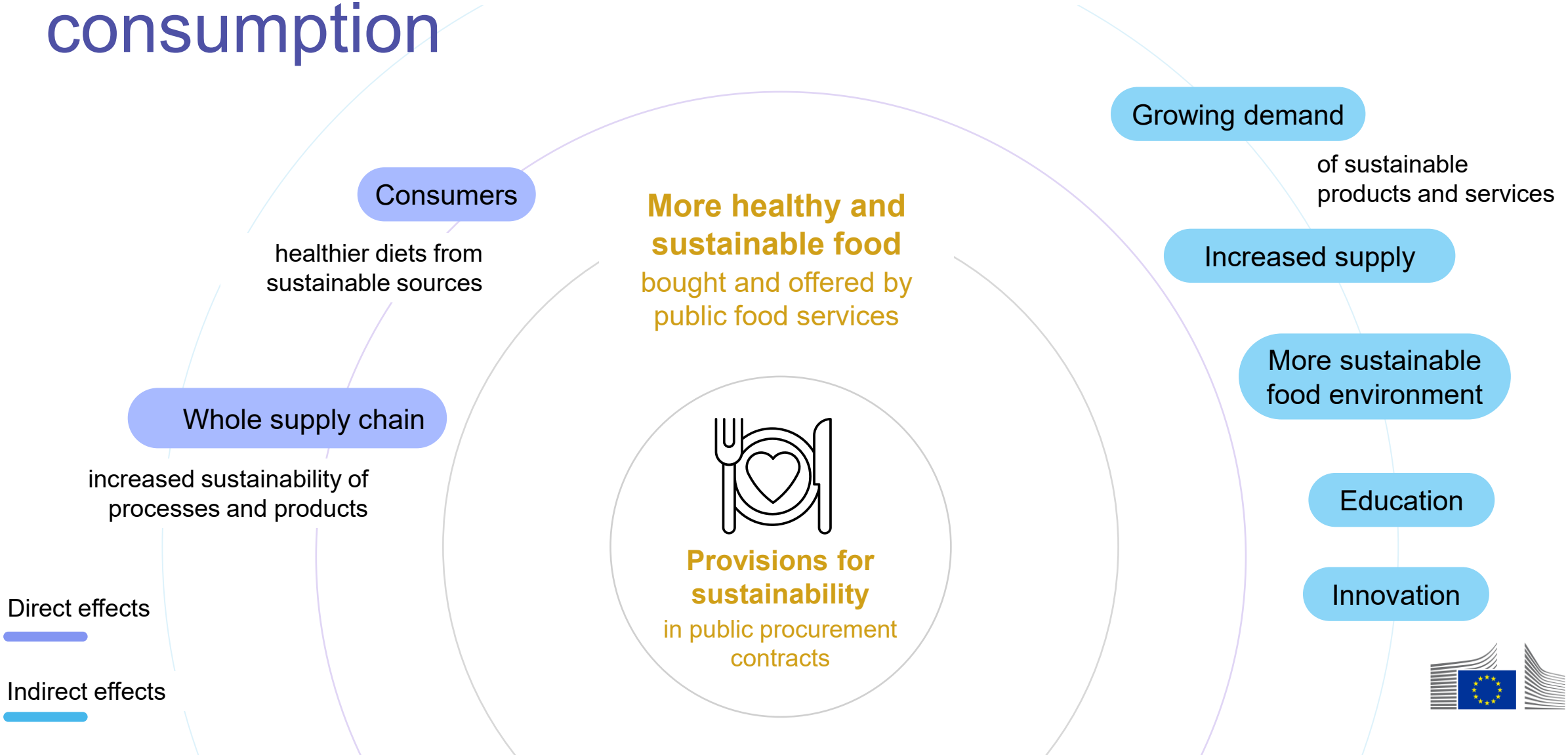
(2022)

EU Food System Monitoring Dashboard

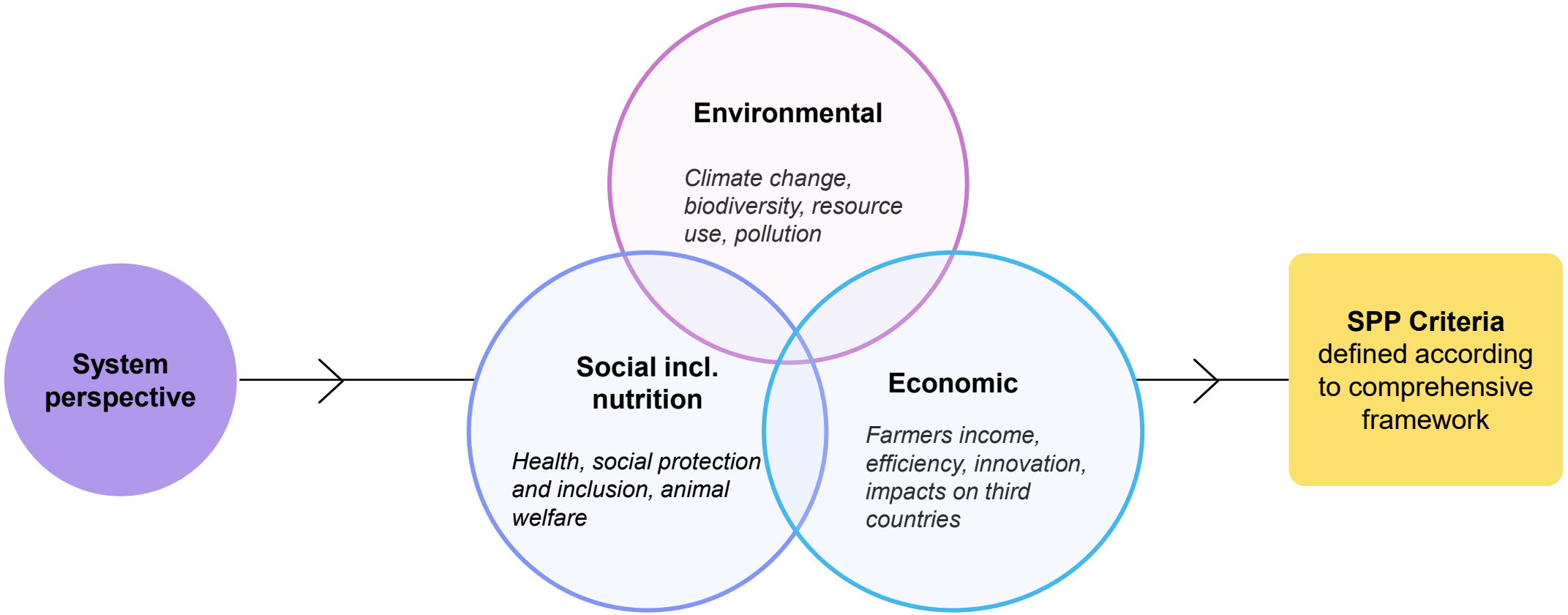


[JRC Publications Repository - Criteria for Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) for Food, Food services, and Vending machines]

Public procurement: a powerful leverage to shape sustainable production and consumption



Integrating all sustainability dimensions



As key approach to address sustainability transitions

Accounting for synergies, trade offs

Considering all stages of the value chain (Life Cycle thinking)

From Green to Sustainable Public Procurement

2019

Green Public Procurement (GPP)

Focus on environmental impacts, limited coverage of social impacts, no inclusion of nutrition

2023-2025

JRC Analysis

Existing criteria and best practices in EU Member States collected by contracted study

Scientific analysis and mapping to sustainability framework

Stakeholders' consultation

500+ criteria already implemented in EU Member States

2026

Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP)

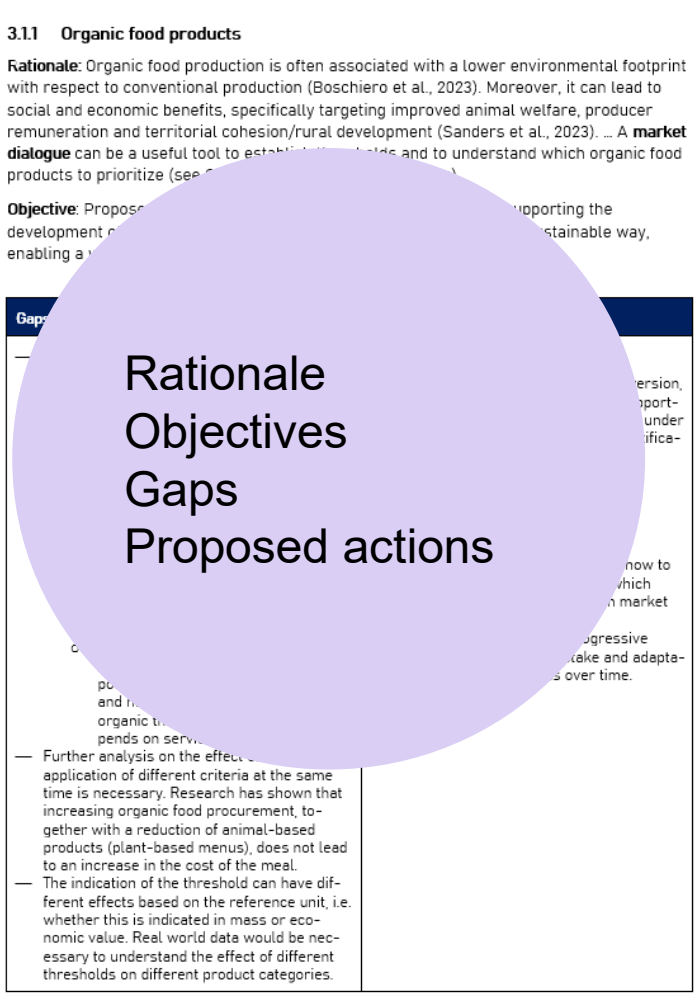
Environmental dimension, based on GPP

Economic and social dimension, including nutrition

Tools, best practices and monitoring

Concrete, harmonized guidance

Example: Organic Food Products



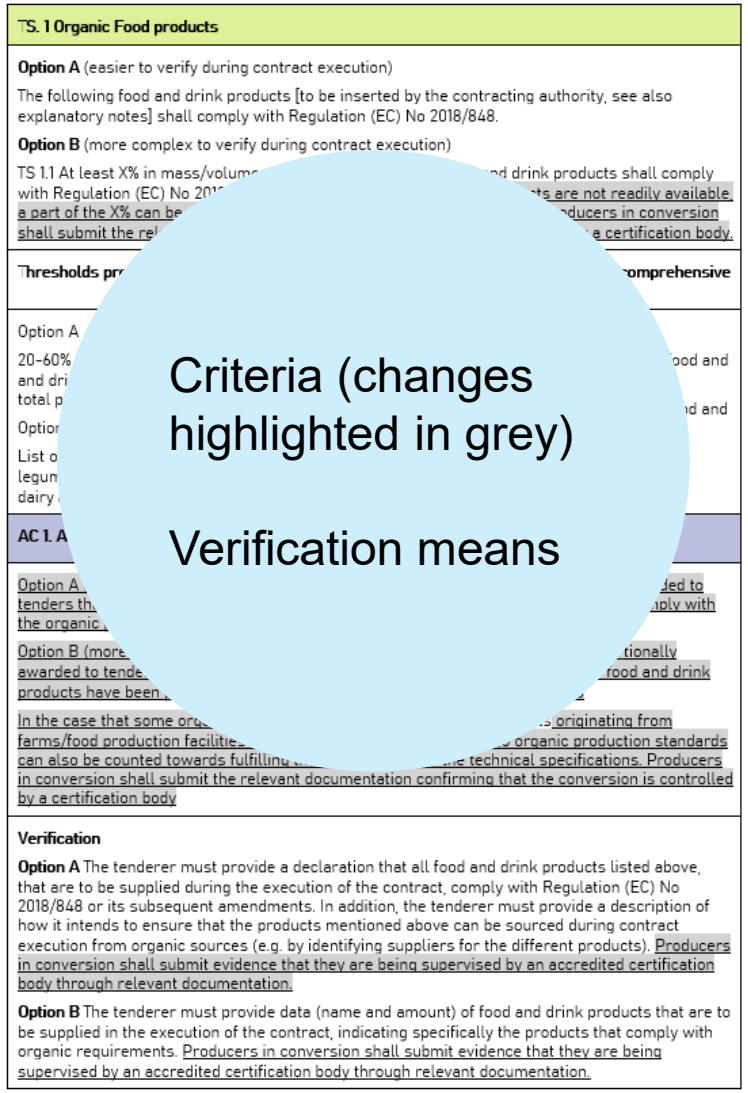
3.1.1 Organic food products

Rationale: Organic food production is often associated with a lower environmental footprint with respect to conventional production (Boschiero et al., 2023). Moreover, it can lead to social and economic benefits, specifically targeting improved animal welfare, producer remuneration and territorial cohesion/rural development (Sanders et al., 2023). … A **market dialogue** can be a useful tool to estab… and to understand which organic food products to prioritize (see …

Objective: Propos… …upporting the development … …stainable way, enabling a …

Gaps	
—	…ersion, …sport- …under …ifica-
	…now to …which …market
	…ogressive …take and adapta- …over time.
— Further analysis on the effect … application of different criteria at the same time is necessary. Research has shown that increasing organic food procurement, together with a reduction of animal-based products (plant-based menus), does not lead to an increase in the cost of the meal. — The indication of the threshold can have different effects based on the reference unit, i.e. whether this is indicated in mass or economic value. Real world data would be necessary to understand the effect of different thresholds on different product categories.	

Rationale
Objectives
Gaps
Proposed actions



TS. 1 Organic Food products

Option A (easier to verify during contract execution)

The following food and drink products [to be inserted by the contracting authority, see also explanatory notes] shall comply with Regulation (EC) No 2018/848.

Option B (more complex to verify during contract execution)

TS 1.1 At least X% in mass/volume … and drink products shall comply with Regulation (EC) No 20… …ts are not readily available, a part of the X% can be … …oducers in conversion shall submit the rel… …e certification body.

Thresholds pr… …omprehensive

Option A

20-60% … …ood and and dri… total p…

Option… …d and

List o… legum… dairy …

AC 1. A…

Option A … …ed to tenders th… …ply with the organic …

Option B (more … …tionally awarded to tende… …food and drink products have been …

In the case that some org… …originating from farms/food production facilities … organic production standards can also be counted towards fulfilling … …e technical specifications. Producers in conversion shall submit the relevant documentation confirming that the conversion is controlled by a certification body

Verification

Option A The tenderer must provide a declaration that all food and drink products listed above, that are to be supplied during the execution of the contract, comply with Regulation (EC) No 2018/848 or its subsequent amendments. In addition, the tenderer must provide a description of how it intends to ensure that the products mentioned above can be sourced during contract execution from organic sources (e.g. by identifying suppliers for the different products). Producers in conversion shall submit evidence that they are being supervised by an accredited certification body through relevant documentation.

Option B The tenderer must provide data (name and amount) of food and drink products that are to be supplied in the execution of the contract, indicating specifically the products that comply with organic requirements. Producers in conversion shall submit evidence that they are being supervised by an accredited certification body through relevant documentation.

Criteria (changes highlighted in grey)

Verification means



Best practices ar…

Austria

The countr…

The follo… product… …to the mo…

— M…
— M…
— M…

(NaB… Verpl… conte…

Denm…

The Dan… …2 to promote … …% of food produ… …ation of economic s… … kitchens to us… …e conversion of ki… …nd Food Administration (D… …. The program relied on collaboratio… …anish Agriculture and Food Council, to deve… …erated knowledge on best practices and provided in… …s. Despite the program's efforts, there was no systematic mo… …government achievements in terms of procurement of organic food. However, the program did lead to an increase in the availability of organic food products for public sector kitchens, and food wholesalers reported that they were able to source all necessary organic food products by early 2013. Overall, the program's impact was limited by its voluntary nature and the lack of systematic monitoring. However, it did contribute to an increase in the use of organic food in public sector kitchens and helped to promote the development of the organic food market in Denmark.

https://www.organicseurope.bio/content/uploads/2021/06/IFOAMOE_Best-Practice-in-Organic-Public-Procurement_The-case-of-Denmark.pdf?dd

Best practices
Tools

Criteria for FOOD

	Adapted from EU GPP	Proposed
	Organic food products	Primary production – Sustainable agricultural management
	Animal welfare (extended list)	
	Fisheries and aquaculture	
	Fair and ethical trade products	Working conditions and inclusion of vulnerable groups in primary production, transportation, and processing stages
		Short food supply chains

Criteria for FOOD SERVICES

Adapted from EU GPP	Proposed
Training for staff, purchase of kitchen equipment, waste prevention, energy and water use efficiency,…	Participation in education and awareness raising
	Food environments
	Traceability of sustainability information
	Working conditions and inclusion of vulnerable groups in food services

Criteria for VENDING MACHINES

From EU GPP	Proposed
Offering organic and fair-trade products, purchase of new vending machines, use of disposable cups	Guidance on providing healthy and nutritious snacks, together with recommendations on placing

HORIZONTAL Criteria



Healthy and sustainable meals

Based on nutritional criteria in food public procurement in EU countries & latest dietary recommendations from international bodies

- Nutrients
- Food groups
- Specific criteria for infants and children
- Specific criteria for packaged and ready-to-eat foods



Food waste prevention

To foster action towards food waste reduction



Monitoring

Key to assess effectiveness

Proposed nutritional criteria

Nutritional criteria in public procurement in multiple EU countries

AND

Latest dietary recommendations from international bodies

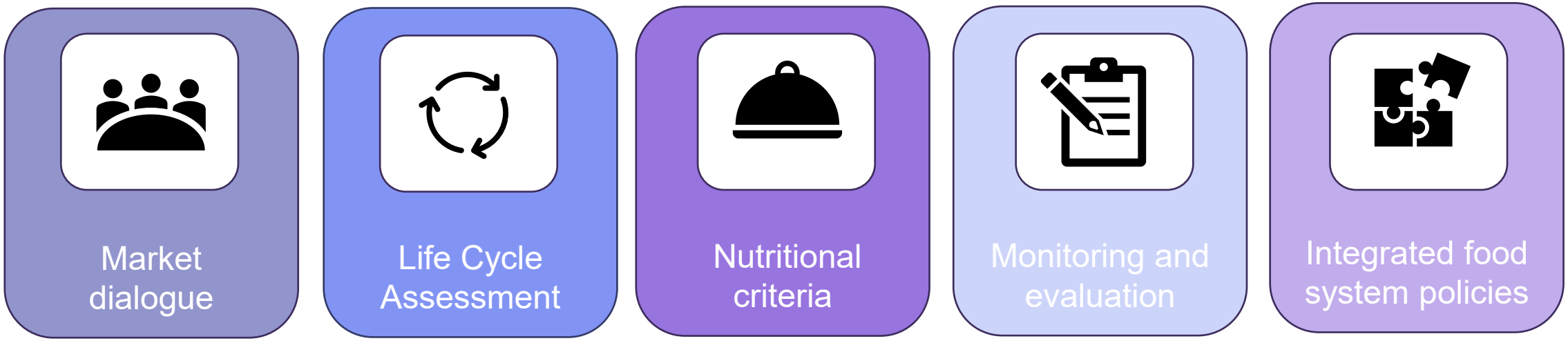
Healthy and sustainable meals:

Criteria for nutrients and food groups

+ Promotion of fruit, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds

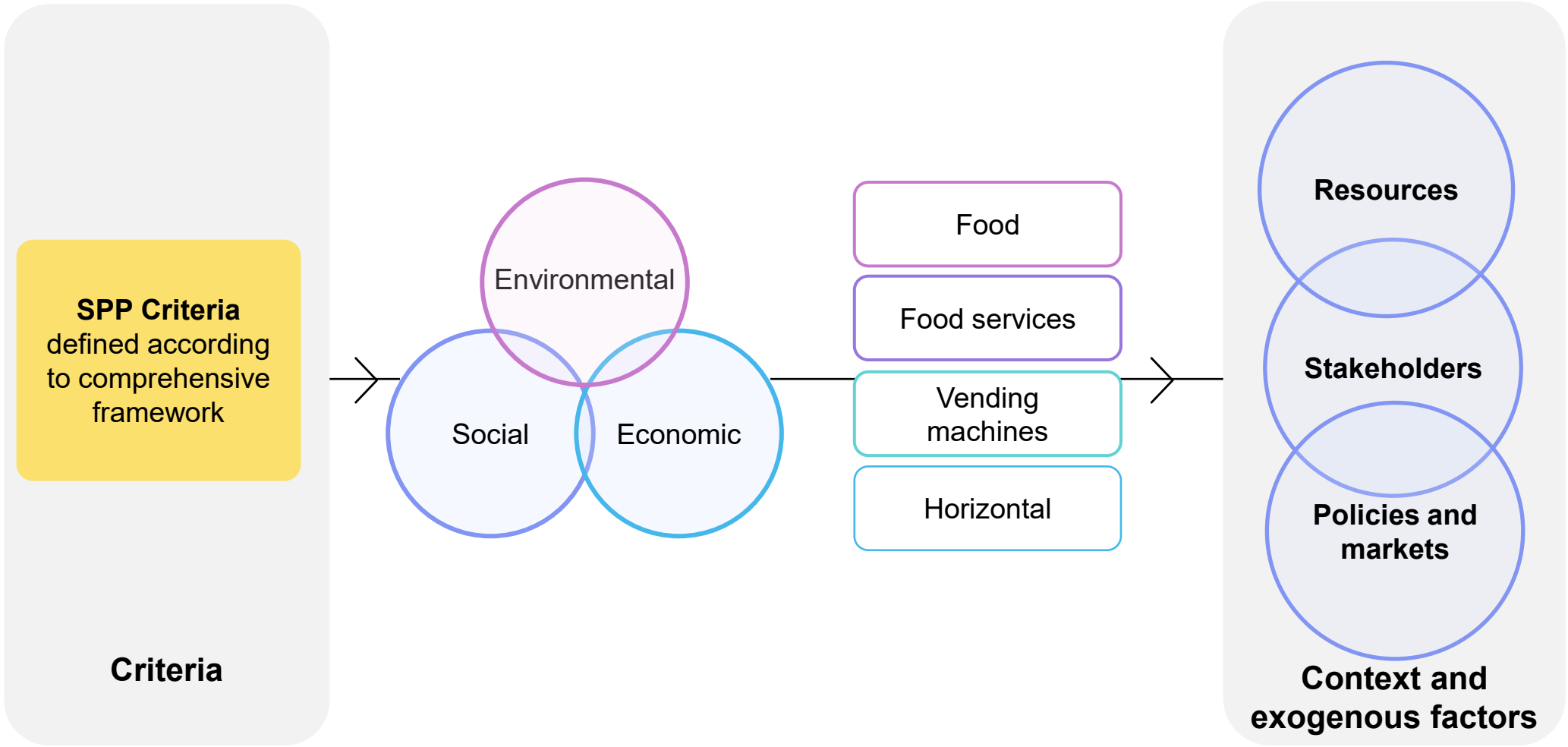
− Limiting salt, free sugars, saturated fats, alcohol, and red & processed meats

Further supporting tools



Capacity building and training of contracting authorities and stakeholders

A broader perspective: public procurement for sustainable food systems



Possibilities for implementation



Source of inspiration

for national, regional or local authorities to promote sustainability of the food system through public procurement

Support to public authorities

who want to use public procurement of food in a strategic manner, in order to address environmental, social and economic considerations throughout the food chain

Further progress

in implementation, e.g. via relevant networks

Proposal for a new Regulation

PRESS RELEASE | Sep 9, 2026 | Brussels | 4 min read

Commission proposes simpler and more strategic Public Procurement rules

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Today, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a new Regulation to modernise and simplify the EU's public procurement framework to support effective investments in public services and infrastructure in line with the Union's policy objectives.

Drawing on extensive consultations with public buyers, businesses, trade unions, and civil society, the Commission is proposing an ambitious reform to make public procurement simpler, more flexible, and more effective. It will help complete the Single Market for public procurement, which accounts for around 15% of the EU's GDP.

Public procurement is central to both the European economy and citizens' daily lives, covering everything from transport, infrastructure, and energy systems, to schools and health care services. The proposal is expected to deliver significant administrative annual savings of €650 million, resulting from a burden reduction of €80 million for public buyers and of €570 million for economic operators.



Article 53

Food procurement

1. For the purposes of pursuing objectives set in Articles 50(2) and Article 55(2), public buyers may also take considerations related to the quality and sustainability of food into account when procuring food, as appropriate, in specifications, award criteria or conditions for the performance of contracts, to the extent that they are related to the subject-matter of the contract.

2. The food-specific considerations referred to in paragraph 1 may relate, in particular, to the following:

   (a) fairness and transparency in food supply chains requirements and conditions, in particular a fair renumeration of the farmers involved in the production of procured food;

   (b) the organisation of the food supply chain;

   (c) requirements or conditions on organic production methods, quality schemes such as geographical indications, and other production methods;

   (d) nutritional value and health effects, freshness and seasonality of food criteria;

   (e) animal welfare requirements.

Thank you

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