

International School Meals Day: call to EU policymakers for healthy, sustainable, organic meals for all children

STRASBOURG, FRANCE, 13 MARCH 2025 - On this year's International School Meals Day, students, alongside delegates from IFOAM Organics Europe and ICLEI Europe, brought their call for healthy, sustainable and organic school meals as well as the integration of comprehensive food education in schools to European decision-makers in Strasbourg. Invited by Member of the Parliament from the Socialists and Democrats Dario Nardella, the student delegation from the Markgräfler Gymnasium (Germany) engaged in a dynamic discussion with key figures including Strasbourg's Mayor Jeanne Barseghian, Members of the European Parliament from all political parties, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Food, Christophe Hansen, and EU Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, Olivér Várhelyi.

School meals, serving over 50 million EU children daily and providing up to 50% of their energy, significantly impact the health of children but also the work of farmers, and the environment. Organic school meals are a powerful policy tool, aligned with the EU's Agriculture 2040 vision, and promoting the sustainability of the European agri-food system, its competitiveness, and food sovereignty in the EU. Programs like [SchoolFood4Change](#) put that in practice by combining organic school meals with farm visits, cooking classes, and a holistic school food approach that teaches future generations to respect food, farmers, and the environment - not just through lessons, but through experience.

During the discussion, Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Christophe Hansen touched upon several important aspects by saying that "Healthy & sustainable food is a responsibility for politicians, schools, & consumers alike. We must reconnect consumers with food producers & ensure fair prices for farmers. Educating children about food production is key to a better future".

Following up on the topic of health, Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare Olivér Várhelyi stressed that "School meals are about building healthy, successful generations. With over half of EU adults overweight, we need to start at school to teach children healthy eating habits. Investing in this now will bring lasting health & economic benefits".

IFOAM Organics Europe and ICLEI Europe are demanding the establishment of minimum criteria in public food procurement, including the target of minimum 20% of organic products to be served in public canteens. School meals can be catalysts for food system transformation towards more sustainability, supporting farmers engaged in sustainable methods of production such as organic farmers, contributing to the health of children and the revitalisation of rural communities. The minimum requirements presented in our [Manifesto](#) and promoted through the Buy [Better Food Campaign](#) can achieve this transformation.

As our Director Eduardo Cuoco stated: "A school meal is not just a meal - it is an investment in our children's health, a driver for rural economies, and a strategic tool for shaping the future of agriculture!".

Ends.

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Background information

Useful documents

European organic movement's official position

- Manifesto for establishing minimum [standards for public canteens across the EU](#)

Other

- [SchoolFood4Change](#)
- [Buy Better Food Campaign](#)

IFOAM Organics Europe is the European umbrella organisation for organic food and farming. With almost 200 members in 34 European countries, our work spans the entire organic food chain and beyond: from farmers and processors organisations, retailers, certifiers, consultants, traders, and researchers to environmental and consumer advocacy bodies.



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