Module 1 – The key role of kindergarten staff to change food habits

This module provides kindergarten staff tools to identify their role to create an awareness of a healthy, socially and ecologically sustainable eating culture in the kindergarten. Furthermore the areas of action – when it comes to food and eating habits in kindergartens - are introduced.



What is the goal of this module?

Unit 1: Understand the key role of kindergarten staff for the development of food culture and eating habits

Unit 2: Perceive chances and challenges for kindergarten staff

Unit 3: Find the areas for actions in kindergartens, concerning food

After finishing this module I will have learnt:

1. to reflect eating habits, values and attitudes regarding food, appropriate eating behavior or table manners and to determine the lasting effect of the kindergarten staff on the development of children´s food habits.
2. to identify the role of kindergarten staff to create an awareness of a healthy, socially and ecologically sustainable eating culture in the kindergarten.
3. what are the areas of action, when it comes to food in kindergartens and what can be done to change food habits and to make meals healthier and more sustainable.

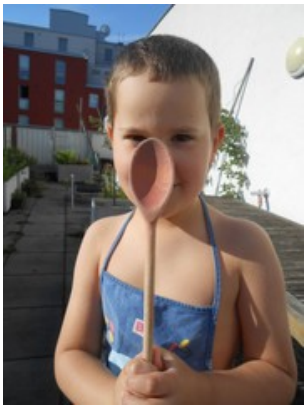
Unit 1 – Key role of kindergarten staff for developing food culture und eating habits

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. reflect food culture and eating habits in the kindergarten
2. challenge existing rules and regulations concerning eating/acting with food
3. affect children´s eating habits in a positive manner

Introduction into the topic:

Balanced nutrition makes a vital contribution to promoting health and sustainability. At kindergarten level, the offering, presentation and pedagogical guidance of food can help to path the way for developing healthy eating habits. Tasks and daily routine of pedagogues and kindergarten staff have changed radically in the past years.



The number of hours a child stays in kindergarten and school is increasing. This leads also to an increase of meals taken there, often to a full board service. An increasing number of children of migrants or refugees with various religious and cultural background have to be integrated. Thus, there is an increasing charge for developing healthy and sustainable eating habits in kindergartens. Pedagogues and kindergarten staff play a vital role in this process.

Chapter 1 – Food culture and eating habits – where do they come from?

The eating habits children practice early in life affects their health and nutrition and is formative to shape food attitudes and eating patterns through adulthood. Research in the nutritional situation of children have shown that there is a need for action. At kindergarten level, the offering, presentation and pedagogical guidance of food can help to path the way for developing healthy eating habits. Eating together promotes a sense of belonging together and brings a positive influence into group dynamics.



Taste, food quality, atmosphere and attentiveness are the fundaments for enjoying food and drink and each other's company. Therefor common meals have a prominent place in the day-structure of kindergartens. Adults eating habits, values and attitudes regarding food affect their expectations to children´s eating behavior, the rules and rituals in kindergartens are established. There are different expectations, doctrines and ideologies from parents and kindergarten staff about food quality (e.g. about what´s healthy or unhealthy, tasty, enough, sustainable, fair trade, less wastage …) and eating manner (how to eat in a proper and decent way).

How adults see these things, is often affected by knowhow and information but also by old behavioral patterns or their religious, cultural and individual background. A mutual reflection considering food culture and eating habits, that are established and lived in kindergarten is worthwhile to find out, what should remain and what should be changed in order to create healthy eating habits.

A first step is to find out, which values and attitudes regarding food, eating behavior or table manners are important for each individual pedagogue or caregiver. After that, the staff can decide together what are the basic rules for all to follow and which common framework conditions are needed.

Methods to reflect personal eating habits in your kindergarten-team:

- warm-up with a culinary profile of each team-member. The guidance you´ll find in the activity-sheet “culinary profile”
- questionnaire with discussion or presentation in the team. You find the leading questions in the checklist “Reflecting my eating habits”.
- Nutritional biography. You find the guidance how to create and interpret a nutritional biography in the activity-sheet “Nutritional biography”.

Guidance: Nutritional biography (docx - 73kB)



Guidance: Culinary profile (docx - 81kB)

Checklist: Reflecting my eating habits (docx - 72kB)

In the checklist “Reflecting food culture/eating habits in the kindergarten” you´ll find some questions, that might help to reflect the status quo and to develop common values and attitudes in your team of kindergarten staff (including pedagogues as well as kitchen staff). To be guest in another kindergarten, can be a fruitful exchange of experience

concerning atmosphere in mealtime.



Checklist: Reflecting food culture/eating habits in the kindergarten (docx - 72kB)

Other learning tools:

www.contakt-spuren.ch/migrationsspuren-auf-dem-teller

Project “Child-oriented Catering”, www.choca.eu

Chapter 2 – Being a role model and challenging obsolete rules and regulations

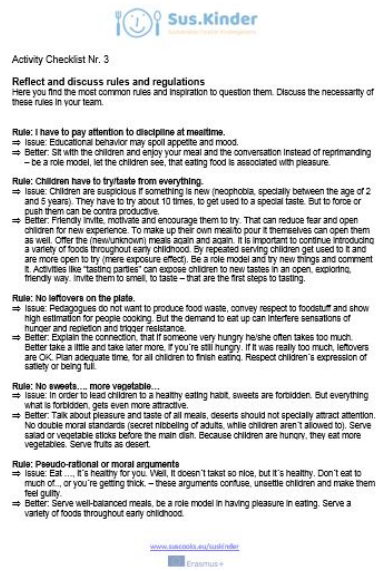
There are many possibilities in learning and experiencing around eating and drinking. What is good for me, what is good for the environment, the climate? In Module 2 you find a lot of valuable knowhow and advice to raise food quality in kindergartens. But: increasing requirements can lead to more pressure, what´s not our objective. If children feel misunderstood, not respected, controlled or even humiliated by rules and how they are communicated, it´s very bad for their relation and development. Kindergarten staff has to be cautious but also clear in defining, what is really important about food, eating and drinking and pass this along to the children.

Research has shown that the eating behavior of parents but also of kindergarten staff has a major impact in children´s behavior. So, it is a matter of being authentic and emphatic in working with children – always and therefor also at the dining table.

Here you find some points that might help to question previously stated rules:

- What is the intention behind the rule?
- Could this object also be achieved without this rule?
- What´s better in having this rule than having it not?

To scrap outdated rules can be very relieving.



Sus.Kinder

Activity Checklist Nr. 3

Reflect and discuss rules and regulations
Here you find the most common rules and inspiration to question them. Discuss the necessarity of these rules in your team.

Rule: I have to pay attention to discipline at mealtime.
⇒ Issue: Educational behavior may spoil appetite and mood.
⇒ Better: Sit with the children and enjoy your meal and the conversation instead of reprimanding – be a role model, let the children see, that eating food is associated with pleasure.

Rule: Children have to try/taste from everything.
⇒ Issue: Children are suspicious if something is new (neophobia, specially between the age of 2 and 5 years). They have to try about 10 times, to get used to a special taste. But to force or push them can be contra productive.
⇒ Better: Friendly invite, motivate and encourage them to try. That can reduce fear and open children for new experience. To make up their own meal/to pour it themselves can open them as well. Offer the (new/unknown) meals again and again. It is important to continue introducing a variety of foods throughout early childhood. By repeated serving children get used to it and are more open to try (‘mere exposure effect). Be a role model and try new things and comment it. Activities like “tasting parties” can expose children to new tastes in an open, explorihg, friendly way. Invite them to smell, to taste – that are the first steps to tasting.

Rule: No leftovers on the plate.
⇒ Issue: Pedagogues do not want to produce food waste, convey respect to foodstuff and show high estimation for people cooking. But the demand to eat up can interfere sensations of hunger and repletion and trigger resistance.
⇒ Better: Explain the connection, that if someone very hungry he/she often takes too much. Better take a little and take later more, if you´re still hungry. If it was really too much, leftovers are OK. Plan adequate time, for all children to finish eating. Respect children´s expression of satiety or being full.

Rule: No sweets.... more vegetable...
⇒ Issue: In order to lead children to a healthy eating habit, sweets are forbidden. But everything what is forbidden, gets even more attractive.
⇒ Better: Talk about pleasure and taste of all meals, deserts should not specially attract attention. No double moral standards (secret nibbeling of adults, while children aren´t allowed to). Serve salad or vegetable sticks before the main dish. Because children are hungry, they eat more vegetables. Serve fruits as desert.

Rule: Pseudo-rational or moral arguments
⇒ Issue: Eat ..., it´s healthy for you. Well, it doesn´t takst so nice, but it´s healthy. Don´t eat to much of.., or you´re getting thick. – these arguments confuse, unsettle children and make them feel guilty.
⇒ Better: Serve well-balanced meals, be a role model in having pleasure in eating. Serve a variety of foods throughout early childhood.

www.suscooks.eu/sushrider
Erasmus+

In the following checklist “rules and regulations” you´ll find the most common rules and inspiration to question them:

Checklist: Rules and regulations (docx - 73kB)

Other learning tools:

Volker Pudel: „Ketchup, Bigmac, Gummibärli“ , 1995, Quadriga-Verlag

Website “Gib acht, Wertschätzung und Verschwendung von Lebensmitteln”,
www.evb-online.de/schulle_materialien_wertschaetzung_uebersicht.php

Erin. K. Eliassen: The impact of teachers and families on young children´s eating behavior, **link to artikel**

Chapter 3 – Developing a beneficial framework in the kindergarten

At the time that children reach the schooling age, their eating habits, taste preferences, values and ideas of food and nutrition are quite firmly set. Kindergarten staff is responsible for establishing supportive conditions and framework for a healthy, sustainable food culture and good atmosphere in kindergartens. They also have to decide or co-determine, what will be served – regarding to a healthy, well-balanced and sustainable food choice. Within this framework, children can develop beneficial eating habits and appetite, without pressure.

Factors that influence the eating atmosphere are especially:

- room and table design (e.g. friendly, colorful furniture and dishes, nice decoration of room and table, bright and adequately light, easy to clean, table big enough for everyone, low noise level…)
- seating arrangements (e.g. table fellowship)
- rituals and timetable (fixed dining times or dining periods with enough time to enjoy food, rituals for the beginning of meals like toast at the beginning, round table discussions…)
- participation (e.g. setting the table, the design of the table decoration or the taking of the table service.)
- the food quality (more in Modul 2)
- possibility of independent replenishment of food (assessment of one's own feeling of hunger, to strengthen self-competence)
- accompaniment of the meals by loving kindergarten staff/kitchen staff (staff eats together with children, staff don´t assign unreflected their own preferences and dislikes to children)



Other learning tools:

Marianne Maier: Beim Essen Achtsamkeit lernen und Körper und Seele in Einklang bringen. In: TPS Ausgabe 1 2008, S. 23–25.

Unit 2 – Chances and challenges for kindergarten staff under changing conditions in kindergarten and primary school

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. set food standards in boarding as well as in pedagogical work
2. build a nutrition team and set common objectives
3. create an action plan and conductive framework conditions

Introduction into the topic:

Food and nutrition are one of the most vital parts of human culture. Until recently, food related knowledge and skills were transferred informally in intact family situations from one generation to another, and nutrition was confined to seasons and to regional products. In the past decades, technological progress, globalization and working environment have interrupted this traditional transfer of nutrition competence.

Children spend increasing hours per day in kindergarten/school. Their knowledge about food preparation, products, nutrition is generated there. Eating habits, taste education, culinary practice and awareness of cultural heritage are built and anchored in their daily living environment kindergarten/school. Handling of food and nutrition in kindergartens has an impact on health, sustainability, regional development and culinary tradition. There are chances and challenges for kindergarten staff to cope with this growing responsibility.

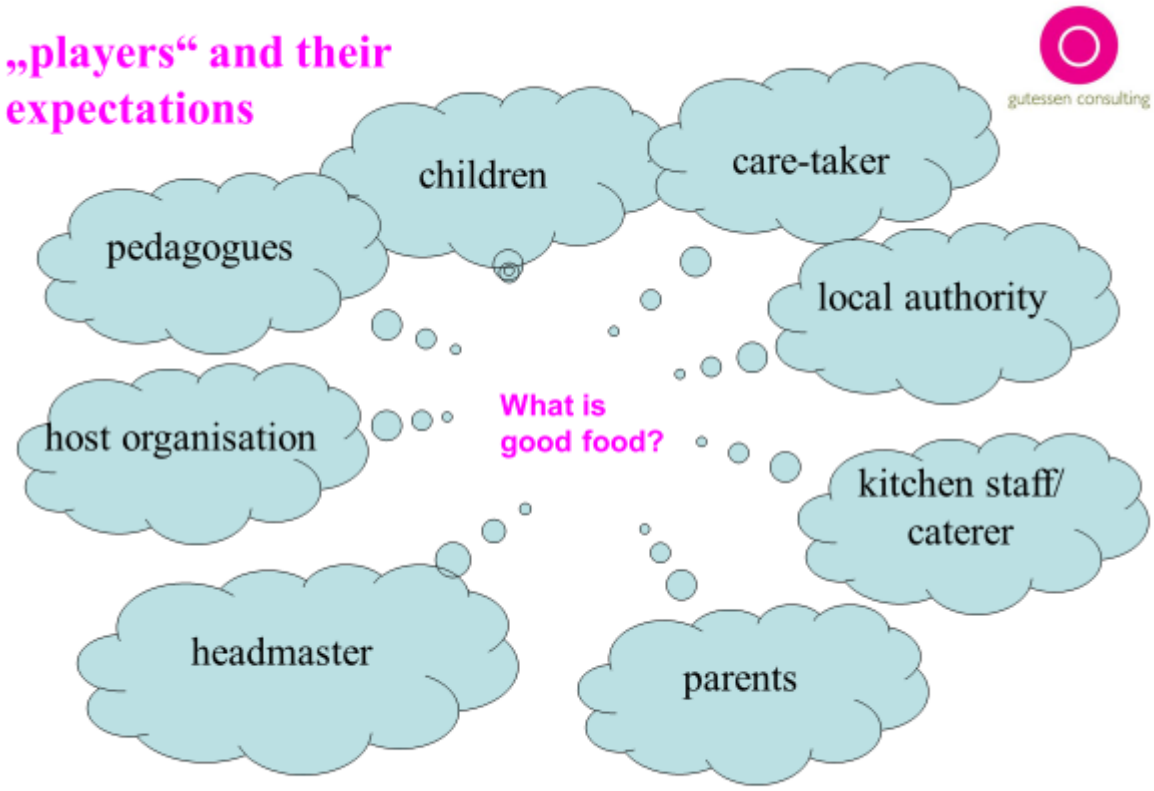


Chapter 1 – Food quality in kindergartens is teamwork

Boarding for children in kindergartens include breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinking. But not only the nutritional and sustainable quality of served meals are important for the development of appropriate children´s eating behavior, but also atmosphere in kindergarten, intercultural communication, pedagogical work etc.

What is considered to be good and high quality depends on the focus. There are many players for providing and handling with food and drinks in kindergartens, which all have different roles, expectations, wishes and possibilities.

In the following illustration typical players around kindergarten-food are shown. They all have different expectations about what means “good food” in the kindergarten. A mutual understanding of these expectations it the first step to optimize food quality and food culture in the kindergarten.



Kindergarten staff can be the driving force to create a nutrition team with all relevant players. Ideal account of members is five to eight. In the first meeting of this team, it is helpful to collect and discuss the expectations and objectives of all members.

Helpful questions for getting a better understanding (could be discussed in the team meeting)

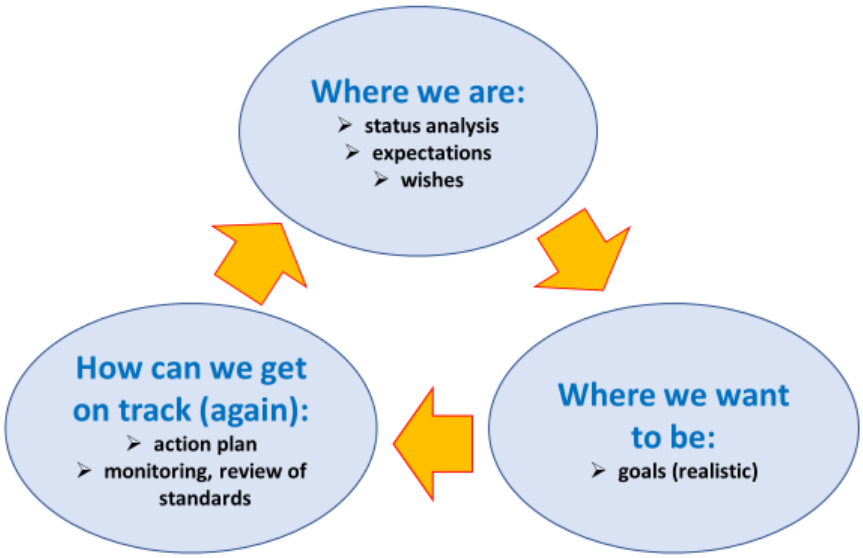
- Which image has the food offer/boarding with the respective actors and target groups?
- Have all players the possibility to express their wishes?
- Are they treated?
- Are meals/food and drink offers integrated into the pedagogical concept?

Chapter 2 – Set and pursue realistic objectives

The kindergarten has an excellent opportunity for a sustainable health promotion, because all children of the respective age groups are reached. Kindergartens staff plays a key role in improving food quality and development of eating habits, because of the characteristic close relationship between kindergarten staff and children and because of their connecting position between carrier organization, parents and of cause the kids. They are the driving force and have the possibility to set food-standards in teaching work as well as in establishing a healthy and sustainable boarding.

4 Steps to improve kindergarten food

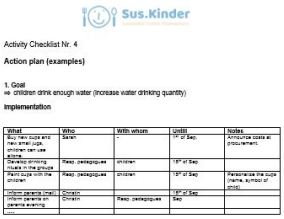
1. Initiate and build a nutrition team/board, with regular meetings (e.g. 3 times a year)
2. Collect expectations, accept variety, set common objectives (expertise – please refer to Modul 2)
3. Create an action plan and conductive framework conditions
4. Regulary review of standards, updates in team meetings



“Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.” Jim Ryun

An **action plan** is a detailed plan outlining the actions that are needed to reach your goals. When creating action plans there are guided steps that need to be followed to ensure success.

First collect all ideas, how to reach your specific objective. Than choose together the most success-promising ideas/actions. A tabular action plan facilitates planning and gives an overview of your action steps. Action steps should be clear and actionable and not vague ideas or thoughts. Each action step needs to have one/more person/s of your nutrition team responsible. In the following checklists you´ll find an example of an action plan and a template that can be used in your kindergarten.


Sus.Kinder

Activity Checklist Nr. 4

Action plan (examples)

1. Goal
ex. children drink enough water (increase water drinking quantity)

Implementation

What	Who	With whom	Until	Notes
Buy new cups and new small jugs, children can use alone	Sarah	-	1st of Sep.	Announce costs at procurement.
Reminder drinking – rituals in the groups	Resp. pedagogues	children	15th of Sep.	
Paint cups with the children	Resp. pedagogues	children	15th of Sep.	Personalize the cups (name, symbol of group)
Inform parents (mail)	Christin		1st of Sep.	
Inform parents on parents evening	Christin	Resp. pedagogues	Sep.	
...				

Checklist: Example of an action plan (docx - 75kB)

Checklist: Template action plan (docx - 73kB)

Tipp: Structural changes which are fix integrated into the daily routine are maintained longer than a single project.

Chapter 3 – Opportunities for inclusion and cooperation with all players

To take and accept the responsibility for boarding in kindergartens, opens kindergartens for new themes and new surroundings. Use of the possibilities and cooperate with all players to improve knowhow and quality of food. Examples for such cooperations can be: asd

- Invitations – invite the chef/kitchen staff to discuss/cook/taste with children
- Excursions to farms/food maker/kitchen

- Tasting sessions with producers and parents
- Gardening with parents
- Harvesting on farms of producers
- Children´s conference with mayor/headmaster…

Visit on Bio-Farm Schörkhofer, Youtube-link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2lB9nulsEE

Visit in Bakery Mattighofen, Youtube-link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2Q2DtLoqAg

Apple jus-production, Youtube-link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Q-Gfgkb4g8

Unit 3 – What can be done: Areas for action when it comes to food?

In this unit I will learn how to:

1. learn from the best practices in the area of food in preschools and schools
2. understand the interdependencies between healthy children, food or caterer choice and procurement, environment and climate
3. develop guidelines for healthy sustainable food program in kindergartens

Introduction into the topic:

as

Early childhood is a critical time for the development of food preferences and eating patterns. Many factors influence dietary intakes and nutritional status of young children and the most important are food availability, parental modeling, praise or reward for food consumption and peer behaviors. Early childhood education is significant for a young child and adds value to his future education and life.



Kindergartens play key roles in the development of healthy eating patterns among children. They are some of the most functional environments for nutrition education because children spend most of the day in these settings. The kitchen and the mealtime is a learning and integration place - before and after the joint, and interdependencies between healthy children, food or caterer choice and procurement, environment and climate need to be explored more in details.

Chapter 1 – Best practice in the area of food in kindergartens

Early childhood is the stage at which education can most effectively influence children's development. Reliable information on ECEC systems in Europe is essential in order to understand what challenges are facing European countries, what we can learn from each other, and what new solutions might be developed to meet the needs of the youngest members of society especially when it comes to food. There are many surveys that prove the role of nutrition in the holistic development of children.

The level of childhood obesity as well as other diet-related and foodborne diseases is increasing in Europe. Nowadays the food culture of children is influenced by many factors as increasing consumption of refined and highly processed

food, fast-food industry, and also a special attention is also paid to the advertising of food with target audience children. That's why it is important to build a sustainable food culture for the start. Sustainable food, in the view of the **Sustainable Development Commission** is food and drinks that:

- is safe, healthy and nutritious, for consumers in shops, restaurants, schools, hospitals etc.;
- can meet the needs of less well-off people;
- provides a viable livelihood for farmers, processors and retailers, whose employees enjoy a safe and hygienic working environment, whether in the UK or overseas;
- respects biophysical and environmental limits in its production and processing, while reducing energy consumption and improving the wider environment, and also respects the highest standards of animal health and welfare, compatible with the production of affordable food for all sectors of society;
- supports rural economies and the diversity of rural culture through an emphasis on local products that keep food miles to a minimum.



A list of good practices in Europe and beyond can be found in **Module 1 Resources, Further reading** that show the interest of modern society to work towards more sustainable food consumption in early childhood.

Interdependencies choices

Interdependencies between healthy children, food or caterer choice and procurement, environment and climate are essential for strong local food systems. Nutrition education curriculum must make the connection between local food systems, garden-based learning and kindergarten food services and contribute to developing sustainable food culture und healthy eating habits in early childhood.

The link between the environmental and education perspectives can be achieved through networking among different actors. By raising children 's knowledge about the environmental impact of food produce and involve them in the food process, from product to plate, we help them to understand what and how we eat and the impact it has on our personal health and the environment (E.g. food waste; vegetarian food which has a much lower CO_2 emissions and so on). Children and parents can be involved also in the preparation and presentation of the food. Kindergartens can contribute to create a better local distribution network for local producers. There are many examples and more can be found in **Module 5**.

Chapter 2 – Take action: Healthy eating patterns

Due to a scientifically established relationship between diet and a number of chronic diseases WHO urges a focus on prevention, starting from before birth, by improving nutritional status during all life-course stages. Healthy eating directly has an influence upon a healthy growth and development and it contributes to quality of life. Establishing healthy eating patterns at an early age provides a critical foundation for good eating habits in elderly people with health, social and financial benefits to people, families and society.

More than 90% of children in Europe attend kindergartens and therefore these settings are a critical part of the social environment that shapes eating behaviour and can play a large role in ensuring that health-enhancing eating behaviour

is learned, practised and supported.

Different cultural and social factors influence the food choice and consumption. Changing established eating habits is difficult: it is essential to start teaching children about healthy eating patterns and related food selection, preparation and cooking skills in order to sustain healthy eating.

Preschools and schools should be responsible for children's learning regarding food and nutrition. The Learning programs should provide opportunities for developing practical food skills related to growing, selection, storage, preparation, cooking and serving food.

Europe is a multicultural society in which there is a wide variety of foods and eating patterns that reflect diverse cultural, ethnic and spiritual groups. Healthy eating programs should reflect cultural and spiritual perspectives within their communities and provide opportunities for children to develop and enhance their appreciation of this diversity.

The learning environment includes establishment of regular eating times (breakfast, morning fruit break, lunch, afternoon snack, evening meal) and a safe and comfortable place where food can be consumed. The opportunity for enjoyable social and cultural interactions while eating in a pleasant relaxing environment encourages children to develop sound eating habits and reduces the likelihood of skipping meals.

More can be found in **Module 2** and **Module 4**

Challenges to Healthy Eating at Child Care:

- Menu variety
- Mealtime environment
- Role modeling
- Fundraisers/ Special events
- Unsupportive posters, books, displays

Solutions for Healthy Eating at Child Care:

- Develop or encourage a healthy eating policy
- Supportive posters, books and visual displays
- Include healthy nutrition messages as part of program planning and activities
- Follow the division of responsibility (feeding relationship- you decide what and when, the child decides how much)



Chapter 3 – Guidelines for kindergarten's healthy and sustainable food program

What does it mean?

- **Sustainable food** is the one which is produced, processed, bought, sold and eaten in ways that provide social benefits, contribute to thriving local economies that create good jobs and secure livelihoods, and enhance the health and variety of both plants and animals (and the welfare of farmed and wild creatures), protect natural resources such as water and soil, and help to tackle climate change.

- **A healthy diet** is one that helps to maintain or improve overall health. It provides the body with essential nutrition: fluid, adequate essential amino acids from protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins, minerals, and adequate calories. The requirements for a healthy diet can be met from a variety of plant-based and animal-based foods. A healthy diet supports energy needs and provides for human nutrition without exposure to toxicity or excessive weight gain from consuming excessive amounts.

Please, check for nutrition guides and nutrition facts labels, published by medical and governmental institutions at your country.

- **Healthy eating habits** refer to a regular and healthy intake of foods derived from plants: vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes (beans, peas, lentils) and limit highly processed foods. Healthy eating means eating a variety of foods that give you the nutrients you need to maintain your health feel good and have energy.
- **A healthy eating environment** is one that environment provides pupils with nutritious and appealing foods and beverages, consistent and accurate messages about good nutrition, and ways to learn about and practice healthy eating. Kindergarten's staff and parents role modeling has a great emphasis on this environment. By demonstrating healthy eating, they support pupils to realize why is important to consume healthier foods and beverages.

Sample guidelines towards healthy and sustainable food program in kindergartens:

- Adopt a coordinated nutrition policy that promotes healthy eating through classroom lessons, a supportive eating environment and rich outdoor learning experience (Module 1).
- Develop and educational program related to food that lays the foundations of healthy eating patterns, recommends healthy eating and prioritizes the increased daily consumption of fruit and vegetables and healthy weight. Support frequent drinking of fresh, clean tap water (Module 2 link).
- Food safety incorporates the proper food handling from farm to plate, including transport, preparation and storage phases in order to minimise the risk of food-related illness. Most of the process is a subject to the legislation, but not the whole one i.e. preschool social event, preparing and consuming food as a teaching and learning activity etc. Food-related health support for children who have food allergies, food intolerance or special dietary requirements (Module 2).
- Pay special attention to the learning environment (Module 3 and Module 4).
- Foster positive communication and relationships with families to support healthy eating outcomes for children (Module 4 and Module 5).

"We cannot predict children's futures; but their early education is a powerful tool for building hope."- Tricia Herbert, United Kingdom, Eco-intelligent education for a sustainable future life, The contribution of early childhood education to a sustainable society, Paris, UNESCO, 2008

Key Actions

1. **Build a "nutrition team" in your kindergarten**
2. **Reflect the existing eating habits, the rules and regulations with the kindergarten staff**
3. **Set common objectives for food standards in boarding as well as in pedagogical work**
4. **Create an action plan and conductive framework conditions**