

In Europe

EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity 2014-2020

Problems related to overweight, obesity and physical inactivity tends to start in childhood. Eating and physical activity habits are established at an early age, addressing the issue of healthy eating and physical activity in early life can help children and their families to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles. By learning and adopting healthy habits when young, the chance that such habits will be sustained into adulthood is greatly increased. Among the main priorities are to promote healthier environments, especially at schools and pre-schools and to provide the healthy option and to increase daily consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables, healthy food and water intake. Also improve a physical activity friendly kindergarten and school environment.

European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015–2020

This Action Plan provides guidance to Member States to support and encourage wider implementation of a “menu” of effective policies at the national level, including coherent, coordinated, multispectral approaches. As social and economic factors strongly contribute to unhealthy diets and poor nutrition, population-wide strategies, policies and targeted interventions are required by governments, with a strong role for health ministries. This will help ensure that the environments in which we live support and encourage healthy patterns of consumption and healthy diets.

Food for Life, Soil Association (England)

Food for Life brings schools, nurseries, hospitals and care homes, and their surrounding communities together around the core ethos of healthy, tasty and sustainable food as a way. Program is aimed to improve the whole food experience – making lunchtimes a positive feature of the day and enriching classroom learning with farm visits, teaching practical cooking and food growing skills and giving everyone in the school community in the opportunity to get involved. Thousands of Food for Life Partnership schools in England are growing their own food; sourcing food locally; and serving freshly prepared meals that follow the high standards of the Food for Life Catering Mark.

Early years award criteria

Within the UK, the Soil Association’s Food for Life project has spent a number of years developing an award for any early year’s stakeholders who have an interest in improving food culture within their associated settings. A Food for Life early years award shows the wider world that the setting is committed to providing tasty, nutritious meals, whilst also helping children to develop good food habits for life through the delivery of practical cooking and growing activities and food-based learning - both for children and their parents and careers. There are a number of evidence-based best practice guidelines for early year’s settings which have been developed for the health and wellbeing of babies and young children. The Food for Life Early Years award has been designed so that any participating setting will meet best practice guidelines. The award has also been developed by working closely with early year’s settings and using expert learning from Food for Life’s existing flagship schools award program which has shown through independent evaluation to make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of young children. The award is based on four areas:

- Food quality (ensuring it meets national nutrition guidelines, is freshly prepared and sustainably sourced).
- Food leadership & food culture (development of a food policy, ensuring that children have a positive dining experience).
- Food education (supporting early learning around food through practical cooking and growing activities).
- Community, partnerships and parental engagement (extending a good food culture beyond the nursery gate by involving parents and careers).

Farms' visits

Lately farms have been expanding their offerings. They offer many opportunities for young children to explore by joining in with daily tasks, including animal feeding and egg collecting, planting or collecting home-grown produce and etc. It is very popular activity in the UK, Germany, Austria, Italy etc. Farm visits teach children where the food they eat comes from and helps teachers provide a wide range of national curricula. Module 3 gives the best examples of how outdoor learning can benefit children.

Here are some examples:

Gardening with Children

It is a website specially designed to be an interactive classroom, allotment plot, and hobby garden of 21st century. It provides useful information for children, teachers and families by dividing to three zones. The school zone keeps informed about seasonal calendar of the farm and the garden and what can be done in a certain time of the year, fact sheets, national curriculum and funding options.

Countryside classroom

Countryside Classroom helps teachers to find resources, places to visit and school support relating to the themes of food, farming and the natural environment. The main task is to teach children in an open environment. Countryside Classroom is managed by a partnership of organizations that represent the very best in food, farming and environment education.

Windmill Hill City Farm

The City Farm provides education for children through experiential learning sessions. Workshops are adapted to suit individual class needs and it covers also specific topics or curriculum area. The farm area is 4.5 acre site and it includes allotments, animal paddocks, children's garden, digging area, indoor growing space and an outdoor kitchen with cob oven. Schools are encouraged to make seasonal visits so children can see the changing seasons and produce available.

The farm offers the following seasonal visit programme:

- Visit 1 Sept/ Oct: Garden tasting and cooking with produce from the gardens. What's seasonal and healthy to eat?
- 2 Feb/March: Seed sowing and farm tour. Where does our food come from?
- Visit 3 April/May: Pond dipping and mini beasts. Explore lifecycles and what a habitat is.
- Visit 4 June/July: Pick It Eat It – harvest and cook the vegetables you have grown. Pollination, introduction to vegetable families and which parts of a plant we eat.

Increasing the share of organic food in childcare facilities and new catering in response to diet diversification

In the UK government procurement policy and the Soil Association report on school meals (2004) have driven a strong emphasis for schools, hospitals and other public sector catering outlets to serve organic food. Over 300 schools have been in contact with Soil Association about improving school meals. In Austria canteens and catering service kitchens in the public and private sectors are increasingly using organic food. Depending on the different provinces they are supplied by a high percentage of organic products. In Vienna kitchens of all public institutions offer certain components in organic quality (up to 30%) and in Salzburg 50% of the food offered in kindergartens is organic.

GPP in practice - Environment - European Commission

Organic, seasonal food for kindergartens, IMEB, Barcelona City Council, Spain is an example of **GPP** (Green Public Procurement) in practice.

New challenges for kindergarten staffs and manager rise for the integration of refugee children and families. Germany and many European countries have to integrate refugees from various countries. The kindergarten is the place where families with young children meet and where there is a way to integrate them into the European culture through direct interaction and knowledge exchange. But to integrate families as well as children from other countries kindergarten staff has to have basic knowledge about the eating habits, the religious background and rituals for not offending the children or the parents with our European consumption patterns. The project puts a special focus on these needs, see **Module 4**.

Extra-EU

UNICEF – for every child

UNICEF stated that nutrition is a lifelong issue which impacts the human development. It is highly recommended a target nutrition programs to covers the key moments in a person's life.

UNICEF's approach to nutrition is:

- Holistic – it looks at the child as an individual and as part of a wider family, community and nation.
- Equity focused–it understands poverty, vulnerability, and marginalization as causes and consequences of malnutrition, and recognizes that good nutrition puts all children on the same starting line.
- Rights-based – it acknowledges that good nutrition is a fundamental right in itself, and the basis for achieving all rights of the child.
- Gender sensitive – it ensures that girls and women have equitable access to good nutrition, and recognizes that undernutrition is most rampant in settings where girls and women face violence and discrimination.
- Evidence-based – it draws on evidence to identify both the problems and the solutions.
- Multispectral – it forges links with other sectors – including health, education, child protection, and water and sanitation – to achieve maximum impact.

UNICEF's latest nutrition strategy (pdf)

Best Practices for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Environments

A Guide for Self-Assessment and Policy Development

The information in this manual is consistent with standards and recommendations applicable in the USA. However the completed Self-Assessment Questionnaire will help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing nutrition and physical activities at a child care site and then facilitate goal setting. This leads to the development of individualized comprehensive nutrition and physical activity policies. The questions are adapted to kindergartens' routine and sample questionnaires are given in an appendix.

A tool for the development of school nutrition programs in the European Region, Program for Nutrition and Food Security, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen 2006

Healthy food and nutrition should be a high priority on every school agenda because of the positive affect on child well-being. Evidence suggests healthy food and improved nutrition improves learning ability, leading to better academic performance. In order to design and implement a school food and nutrition policy it is important to unite all the different stakeholders: youth, school staff, families and community members.

Five steps to designing and implementing a food and nutrition policy for schools:

1. Assemble a core action group
2. Carry out a baseline assessment of nutrition in your school
3. Develop a food and nutrition policy based on: WHO European recommendations for healthy eating and active lifestyle for children and adolescents. Four key elements: the school community, school curriculum, school environment and school nutrition and health services.
4. Develop an action plan in the core action group.
5. Implement, monitor and evaluate the action plan.

Farm to School Network

The National Farm to School Network is as an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education into schools and early care and education settings.

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities.