

# Responsible consumption - public procurement of organic food



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To support the growth of organic agriculture, public procurement of organic food may be a useful instrument to increase the demand and achieve a critical food volume required for efficient distribution. Educational institutions and hospitals are of special interest for pedagogical and health reasons, but are challenging due to the many different stakeholders involved. Several projects have been conducted to study the implementation of organic food in these contexts, to reveal efficient strategies to enhance organic consumption, and describe main hindrances to overcome.

## Background

Bioforsk Organic Food and Farming is a national centre of knowledge and information about organic agriculture. Support for the conversion of large kitchens and catering services introducing organic food has for long been an important task. These experiences formed the required basis to lead an international research project about organic food to the youth, "iPOPY" (2007-2010). Here, we present conclusions from several projects about organic food procurement where Bioforsk has been involved.

## Organic hospital kitchen

During the construction of a new university hospital in Trondheim in 2006, the kitchen decided to introduce 30 % organic food, partly as a means to avoid out-sourcing of the cooking service. This decision also fitted well into the kitchen chef's philosophy of using high quality, fresh ingredients, preferably grown locally, to support a sustainable development (Fig. 1). Supply chains from farm to fork, e.g. for potatoes, were developed. Training and competence building, for all staff involved in the kitchen, were another important activity.



Figure 1. The success has been highly dependent on the enthusiastic kitchen chef, Gunnar Kvamme, who has received several national food prizes.

The aim was rapidly reached, and the hospital continues to serve about 30 % organic and local food by weight (BW). As a result of the kitchen's efforts, the hospital has acknowledged the importance of food as a part of the patient treatment, and has recently declared a food policy.

## Organic in the army

Probably as the only country in the world, the Norwegian Minister of Defence has declared that 15 % of the budgets will be used for organic food by 2012. The aim has been tested in one region since 2007. The organic menus were broadly advertised in the canteens, e.g. on the serving trays and staff aprons (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. The term "naturlig forsvar" (natural defence) was used as a slogan during the army's conversion to organic food.

A survey (Sørum, 2011) showed that military personnel were generally positive towards organic food. Only 9% were negative towards the serving of organic food in the army. Especially the officers were positive, whereas common soldiers tended to be neutral. The army has been a pioneer in Norway to develop calls for tenders where organic food is specified. Concurrently, the army has banned the use of transfat products, to further strengthen their health image.

## Organic school meals

School meals are important for children's health and well-being. In the project "innovative Public Organic food Procurement for Youth" (iPOPY), policies and instruments to support organic food serving in public settings aimed at young people were studied. Five European countries with highly different traditions for the serving of school meals were compared: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Germany and Italy (Fig. 3). Italy has a remarkably high organic share, 40% BW, achieved via ambitious public regulations and adapted calls for tenders. Organic food in schools should be embedded as a whole school approach, emphasizing

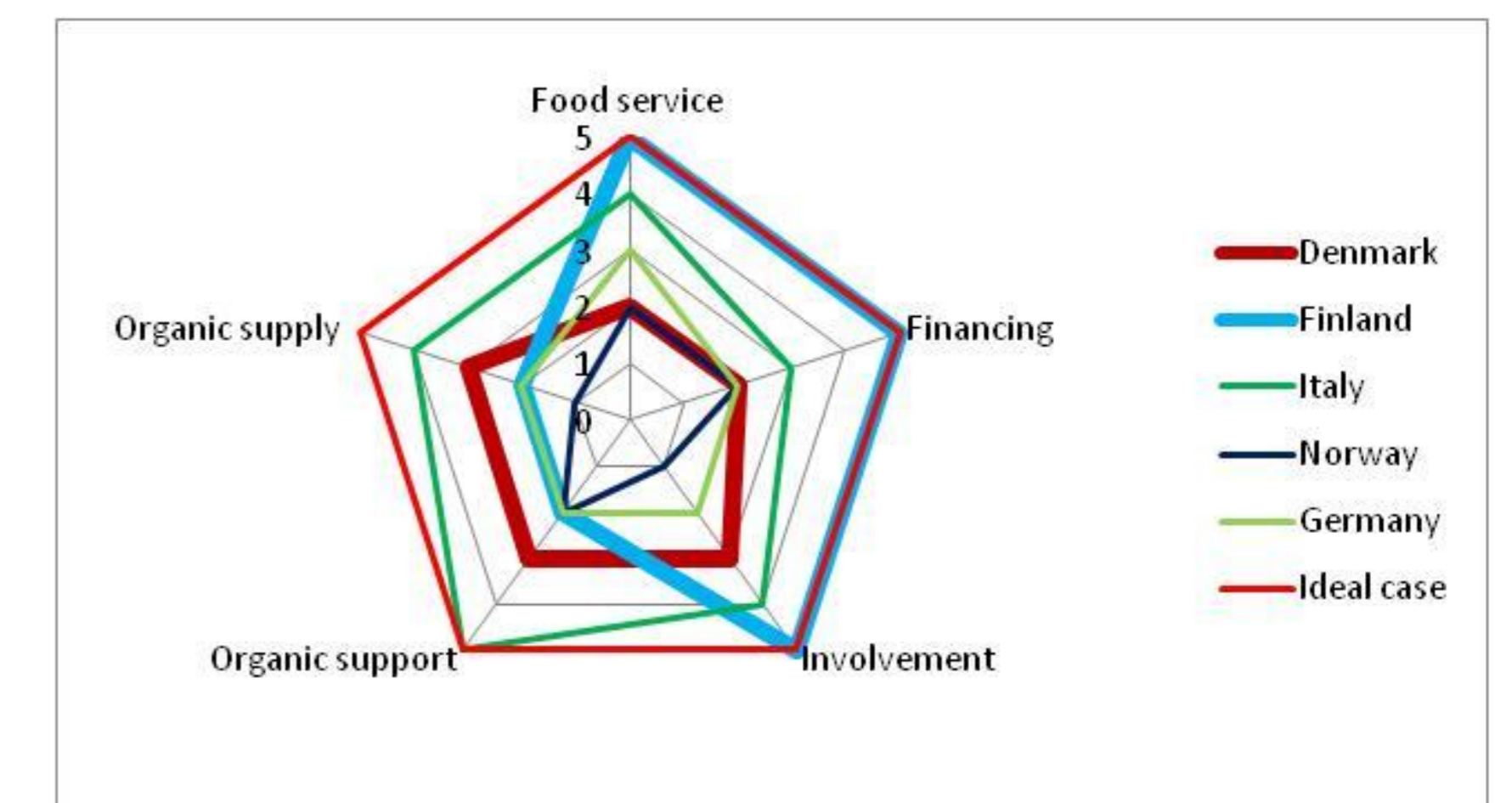


Figure 3. Frame conditions impacting the consumption of organic school food, assessed in the five iPOPY countries and compared to an ideal situation (Løes and Nölting, 2011).

the possibilities to activate the pupils (Fig. 4). Organic food is a well suited topic for teaching about sustainable development, which is a general educational aim.



Figure 4. At Værebroskole, Denmark the pupils prepare the school lunch themselves.

## Public aims are effective

Ambitious public aims, setting levels of organic shares in public procurement e.g. in large cities like Malmö and Copenhagen, have been important to develop the organic markets in Denmark and Sweden. Finland recently defined organic, vegetarian and seasonal food as sustainable, and aims for two sustainable meals per week in public catering by 2015. Carefully designed calls for tender are also important. All stakeholders should be involved to ensure that the organic conversion is well embedded.

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