

# CORE Organic

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# School food supply in North Rhine-Westphalia - Analysis of the current situation

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## Abstract

This paper presents first findings about school meal provision in the region of North Rhine-Westphalia. This is the German federal state with the highest population and also with the highest number of pupils in Germany. Findings demonstrate that the situation and regulation for school meal provision in this region is somewhat disordered and less structured than for example in the city state of Berlin.

The situation is presently changing since the school days have to be longer through the expansion of the all-day-schools, regulated by the communal law. Also, the awareness of a healthy offer for lunch is increasing. Within this process, more and more money has been spent by the government in North Rhine-Westphalia to improve the situation, e.g. the "All-day Initiative" (Ganztags-Offensive). A Coordination Centre (Schulvernetzungsstelle) was created to facilitate communication with all schools. It will also build a central point of reference for school meal provision in North Rhine-Westphalia, even though there are no centralised solutions for all schools in this federal state. Every communal school authority or the individual school itself has to find its own system for presenting a lunch offer to the pupils, e.g. with a school-owned canteen or food provided from catering firms.

There are no compulsory guidelines for the use of organic food in school meal provision in North Rhine-Westphalia. The government only refers to general official guidelines of the German Nutrition Society (DGE – Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Ernaehrung e.V.) which only recommend that 10% organic food should be used in school meal provision. At the moment, and because of the changing situation, the schools are more focused on developing their own infrastructure for serving food or on receiving an overview of caterers' offers. Therefore the integration of organic produce in school food usually plays a minor role. This disordered situation could constitute an interesting point of action for organic catering. It could also be the right point in time for several stakeholders to care about the development and to enforce the provision and the consumption of organic meals in schools. Lastly, it might possibly create a well-organised structure with a high usage of organic food.

**Keywords: iPOPY, school meals, organic, Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia, policy, quality standards**

# SCHOOL FOOD SUPPLY IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION



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## Introduction

The school system in Germany is undergoing far-reaching changes such as the change into an all-day school system. At the same time there is a rising awareness about children's health and well-being. This has to do with more and more pupils being affected by Diabetes and overweight as in many other European countries too. All these contribute to the demand for a well-organised school food provision system. This is especially so in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, which has the highest population and also the highest number of pupils in Germany (in the school year 2008/2009: 2.040.000 pupils). A first analysis of the status quo and the strengths and weaknesses of this situation are presented here.

## Results

First findings in the region of North Rhine-Westphalia about the school meal provision demonstrate that the situation and regulation for school meal provision in this region is less structured than other regions in Germany, e.g. Berlin, and somewhat disordered. The situation is presently changing since the school day is longer through the expansion of the all-day-school model regulated by the communal law. Also, the awareness to do more about healthy offers for lunch is increasing. Within this changing process, more and more money has been spent by the federal government in North Rhine-Westphalia to improve the situation.

A Coordination Centre for School Food in North Rhine-Westphalia (Vernetzungsstelle Schulverpflegung NRW) was created to facilitate communication with all schools and to build a central point of reference for school meal provision this federal state, even though there are no centralised solutions for all schools. The Coordination Centre has started its work in 2008 and is now the main contact and coordination point to improve the situation. Every communal school authority or the individual school itself has to find its own system for presenting a lunch offer to the pupils, e.g. with a school-owned canteen or food provided from catering firms. There are many stakeholders to take into account (see Fig. 1). In addition to this, there are no compulsory guidelines for the use of organic food in school meal provision in North Rhine-Westphalia and no cross-national policies to combine all activities in several federal states.

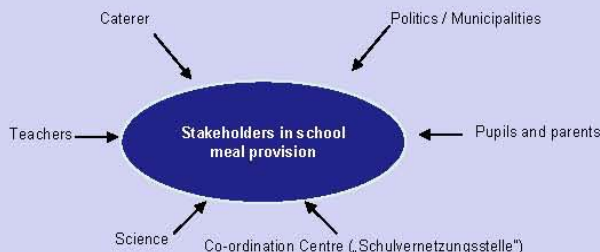


Fig. 1: Stakeholders in school meal provision

## Materials and Methods

To gain an insight into the situation and build up a first status quo this research has been done as a desk study. Current scientific literature as well as advisory and consumer information was analysed. Furthermore, to gain more detailed information, one expert interview was held with the head of the Co-ordination Centre in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The government only refers to general official guidelines provided by the German Nutrition Society (DGE – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Ernährung e.V.) which recommends that of 10% organic food be used in school meals. At the moment and because of the changing situation, the schools are more focused on developing their own infrastructure for serving food or on receiving an overview of caterers' offers. Therefore the adoption of organic produce in school food usually plays a minor role. Presently a great lack of information and advice exists mainly during the decision making process about which catering form should be adopted. Because of this, the decision about which catering form is preferred in schools is this often made according to the criterion "price". Some steps to improve the situation are shown in Fig. 2.

### Important steps to improve the situation in North Rhine-Westphalia

- Improve the acceptance of school meals
- Networking with all important stakeholders
- Provision of information
- Satisfy the demand for consultation

Fig. 2: Steps for improvement

## Case studies in North Rhine-Westphalia

Successful examples in this federal state, often established by initiatives of teachers and parents, show how easy an adoption of organic food in a school kiosk can be. One such example is the "Realschule im Kreuzviertel" in Münster. Two teachers established a pupil-managed school kiosk system, where pupils care for the supply and the sale of snacks, e.g. bread rolls. About 70 pupils get their snacks here daily and they embrace this offer. In this concept organic food is integrated by more than 20%. To support the regional value chain, the kiosk works together with a local bakery and local apple juice is sold.

## Conclusions

This disordered situation could constitute an interesting point of action for organic catering and this could be the right point of time for the several stakeholders to care about the development and to enforce the offer and the consumption of organic meals in schools and possibly create a well-organised structure with a high usage of organic food, for example with compulsory guidelines.

## References

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Case studies: assessable under <http://www.oekolandbau.de/grossverbraucher/bio-kann-jeder/praxisbeispiele/>