



IFSA 2016 Symposium Abstract Submission Template

**Symposium Theme:**

5. Enabling governance, policy and institutions

Number and title of workshop:

5.9 Public Food Procurement Policies: Local and Organic Food in Public Catering Systems

Title of offered paper:

Discrepancy between theory and practice: procurement of local and organic food in public catering systems

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Abstract: (maximum 400 words)

With an increasing awareness for environmental and social sustainability, quality properties of food and services in public procurement become more important. Research results and local development strategies highlight the procurement of local and organic food products as an instrument that contributes to the improvement of both, the sustainable use of natural resources and the regional economy.

Although a number of directives and agreements such as the reform of European legislation on public procurement in 2004 or the European "Green Public Procurement"-criteria enable member states to include environmental and social criteria in award processes, research results point out that the uptake of green and social criteria in tenders does not only vary significantly across the member states, but also across regions and product groups.

For the purpose of identifying factors hampering local and organic food purchases in tendering procedures, this paper aims to point out the differences in theory and practice in public procurement processes. The analysis is based on case studies on school catering in Berlin and the Federal State of Brandenburg, which present two different models of procurement policies. The methodical approach consists of three steps:

- A literature review showing the legal framework of public procurement and recommendations for sustainable (food) procurement
- An analysis of the selection and award criteria in tendering procedures for school meals
- Guided interviews with catering companies highlighting the opportunities of local and organic food services

Results show that the fulfilment of the potential to procure organic and local food services varies. In Berlin, it was the political decision to set fix price per school meal. This concept causes a "quality competition" among caterers driving an increase of organic food to 40%. Organic caterers

in Berlin profit from this concept introduced in 2014. However, they argue that the proportion of local organic products is still low. Following caterers' arguments, the usual test meal, which never reflects daily cooking for school kids, is overrated and pays too little importance to other criteria like origin of ingredients. For Brandenburg, prices per meal are flexible and most decisions focus on value for (little) money instead of organic. Moreover, the analysis shows that published requirements of public procurement tenders and selection criteria are inconsistent which makes compliance very difficult for catering companies in Brandenburg. With this paper, we will develop and discuss our practical recommendations for public authorities that aim to close the gap between theory and practice in their organic procurement procedures.

Keywords: (maximum of 6 keywords)

Public procurement, organic food, food service, tendering, school meals, procurement law

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