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Subject: Draft Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan
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Dear Sir, Madam

Please find attached the Irish Organic Association's submission to the Department's consultation on the Draft Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan.

It would be appreciated if you could confirm receipt of our input. For any further queries on our submission please contact me.

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Head of Policy
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Body

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Input to Public Consultation on the Draft GPP Strategy and Action Plan

17 November 2023

Introduction: Ambitious Green Public Procurement (GPP) policy has the potential to enable and influence a shift towards more sustainable consumption patterns within Irish society and our economy. Organic food procurement can make an important contribution as the only agroecological farming method based on a legally ensured guarantee system. Not only are public organic food and catering services implemented across Europe¹, but it has been demonstrated to work in Ireland in the past.² We, therefore, welcome the recognition and commitment to organic food sourcing in the draft Strategy and Action Plan, which is in line with the goals of the EU Organic Action Plan.³ Below the Irish Organic Association outline recommendations for the final Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan.

Targets for Public Procurement of Organic Food: A minimum of 10% of food procured by public sector bodies to be certified organic from the 1st January 2024 (Target 2) is an important first step in the government's efforts to lead by example. However, this should be complemented by a more ambitious target of reaching up to 30% of organic food procured by the public sector by 2030. Such a target can help to set a clearer direction of travel in terms of the growth and development of Irish organic supply chains. Although organic production in Ireland is starting from a low base and some 'seasonal' organic produce may need to be imported in the short to medium term, there is strong potential for import substitution across a wide range of product lines in the medium to long term.

Proposed New Target 2b

Reach a minimum of 30% of certified organic food procured by public sector bodies by 2030.
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Investing in Organic Public Procurement Capacity-Building: Targets alone are not enough to mainstream organic public procurement and capacity-building efforts need to address the specificities of organic food and catering services. For instance, investments in capacity-building are essential to increase public sector competencies in contract design that effectively procure a wide range of Irish organic produce, including an understanding of availability and seasonality; to empower catering companies/staff to prepare menus with organic ingredients and/or full meals with existing or adapted infrastructure and budgets; and to enable producers and distributors to meet quality requirements, continuity of supply of Irish organic produce and optimise regional distribution channels as organic operators can be widely dispersed. Practical guidance and training for all relevant food actors, complemented by regional pilots, can help to stimulate organic public procurement nationwide⁴.

Proposed New Action 24b

Develop specialised practical guidance and training and regional pilots to foster practitioner capacities that support increased public procurement of certified Irish organic produce.

¹ As well as Denmark, notable examples can be found in Austria, Germany, Finland, France, Italy and Sweden.

² A 2009 DAFM-funded Organic Food Pilot Scheme, an initiative between the Marine Institute, the ICSA and the Compass Group, found that Irish organic produce can be supplied at scale in-season, with a significant reduction in waste.

³ Notably, the [EU Organic Action Plan](#) highlights the potential to boost organic farming, with special attention paid to small farms, micro-enterprises and SMEs, but also notes the lack of knowledge among public administrations on the possibilities of GPP

⁴ Multi-actor approaches to practical guidance and training and regional pilots are required, potentially coordinated by the Office of Government Procurement and the EPA, taking advantage of public agencies' expertise e.g., LEO, Bord Bia, FSAI where relevant.