

## Organic, seasonal food for kindergartens IMEB, Barcelona City Council, Spain

### Background

Barcelona City Council's Municipal Education Institute (IMEB) is responsible for an extensive network of 100 kindergartens, schools and other centres of education, excluding universities. One of the Institute's tasks is to arrange all the in-situ catering services, which is done using an open tender procedure.

As part of Barcelona City Council, the IMEB shares the city's commitment to sustainability as defined in "[Barcelona + Sustainable City Council](#)" programme, which promotes and coordinates the organisation's sustainability initiative.

### Procurement objectives

On a regular basis, IMEB publishes tenders for contracting the catering services for its 95 kindergartens; this GPP Example details the criteria used in the most recent tender issued in May 2013 covering 49 kindergartens for two academic years. As well as using green criteria to minimise the environmental impacts of the school catering service, the tender is divided into six lots covering different geographic areas in order to stimulate competition and the inclusion of SMEs.

### Criteria used

IMEB started introducing sustainability criteria into its catering tenders in 2006. However, the approach and criteria have evolved as a result of the experience gained over this time. Although different tenders are issued to cover the 95 kindergartens, the criteria used and services offered (including in-situ catering and cleaning of the kitchen and dining areas) are the same. The criteria used in the last tender for 49 centres, all of which provide menus stipulated by IMEB, are:

#### Technical specifications:

In order to ensure that contractors can provide the service in an environmentally-sound manner, bidders must provide:

- A training programme and schedule to be implemented for staff during the contract. Regarding environmental aspects, the training must include information about waste minimisation, selective waste collection, the environmental characteristics of food products and low environmental impact cleaning procedures and products used in the contract.
- A waste management plan, with information on actions to be taken to minimise waste and on how each category of waste will be collected and managed. This includes aspects such as the: specific tasks to be undertaken, allocation of responsibilities, positioning of containers, destination of waste, frequency of collection, etc. Categories of waste that must be collected separately are paper/cupboard, glass, plastics/cans, organic matter, used oil and general waste. The separation and appropriate disposal of other types of waste is also encouraged.

In terms of the food provided:

- All vegetables must be fresh (never frozen).
- Fish must be fresh at least 3 times every month (at other times it may be frozen).
- Fruit juices and yogurts must be organic.

#### Award criteria:

A total of 20 points were available in the award phase;

- 10 points were allocated according to the price offered
- The other 10 points related to environmental quality aspects, divided as follows:
  - ◊ 1 point is given for the commitment to use cleaning and hygienic products that comply with the environmental criteria on toxicity and hazardousness defined in the EU Ecolabel, the Nordic Swan or equivalent.



- ◇ 9 points were given for the use of organic food in the daily menus.

*Based on the menus defined by IMEB, a list of products alongside the specific points that could be obtained had to be completed by bidders, indicating whether or not they could source organic produce. The weighting of points for each organic product offered are calculated based on the amount of the product used, the seasonal availability of organic products and the typical market price difference between conventional and organic products (so products that are consumed more frequently and/or when organic are typically more expensive, get more points). This list can be found [here](#).*

Furthermore, in the event of bidders scoring the same number of points, the company with a higher percentage of people with disabilities working for the organisation (above the 2% obliged by law), at the time when the bid is submitted, will be awarded the contract.

#### **Contract performance clauses:**

The tender includes the obligation to comply with any applicable environmental law as a contract performance clause. It also foresees economic penalties for non-compliance with the commitment to provide organic products based on the monthly quality controls conducted by the IMEB.

## **Results**

Altogether 8 companies bid for the tender, which was divided into 6 lots and 4 different companies were awarded the contract to cater for the 49 kindergartens altogether. Almost all bidders obtained the total points for the commitment to provide organic products in the menus (all the offers scored between 8,04 and 9 points) and all obtained 1 point for the commitment to use cleaning and hygienic products complying with the criteria of the EU Ecolabel or equivalent.

The maximum cost of the service was estimated by IMEB to be almost 7,600,000 Euros (including 10% VAT) and the successful bidders offered prices between 11% and 20% lower than this, depending on the lot.

## **Environmental impacts**

Creating demand for organic agriculture and seasonal produce aims to lessen the environmental impacts associated with traditional, and especially chemical- energy- and water- intensive, farming methods.

As outlined in the [Technical Background Report](#) accompanying the EU GPP criteria for Food and Catering Services, organic farming avoids the use of pesticides and herbicides on crops, which can pose a risk to human and ecosystem health. The loss of biodiversity associated with more intensive farming methods is also reduced. Organic farming additionally tends to preserve soil fertility and system stability better than conventional farming systems. This is due to mostly higher organic matter contents and higher biological activity in organically farmed soils than in those which are conventionally managed.

As well as promoting organic, seasonal produce, this tender aimed to reduce the environmental impacts associated with cleaning products used in kitchens by awarding points to those bidders who would use non-toxic and non-hazardous chemicals in cleaning products.

## **Lessons learned**

Due to the gradual approach taken to introducing the environmental criteria into catering service tenders, and the fact that the criteria for most organic products is part of the award phase rather than technical specifications; no major impact in the number of bidders was identified.

The challenge remains the monitoring of compliance with the commitments in the tender; it is rare that IMEB is able to visit every single school or kindergarten to follow up. For each city district there is one person in IMEB responsible for, among other tasks, ensuring that the services contracted (catering, cleaning, etc.) are conducted properly. Most follow-ups are therefore conducted by school staff on behalf of IMEB during monthly quality reports, which include specific remarks on the compliance of organic products. Additionally, every quarter, companies also have to provide information on organic certification. In some cases, invoices for the purchase of organic products are also required, but only on ad-hoc basis. The main lesson is therefore said to be that bidders can easily offer organic products as part of the tender process, but monitoring measures should be strengthened in order to ensure compliance during the entire contract.

For more information, please see European GPP criteria for [Food and Catering](#).

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