

COMBINED EVALUATION ROADMAP/INCEPTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This combined evaluation roadmap/Inception Impact Assessment aims to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback on the intended initiative and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are, in particular, invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the current situation, problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have, including on possible impacts of the different options.

TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Review of the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT – AP NUMBER	DG AGRI.G.3 – PLAN/2021/10573 & PLAN/2021/10576
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	<i>Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013</i> <i>Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 1370/2013</i>
INDICATIVE PLANNING	Q4 2023 (adoption)
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	School scheme explained

This combined roadmap/Inception Impact Assessment is provided for information purposes only. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by this document, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Context, Evaluation, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

Context

The EU school scheme, applying since 2017, supports the distribution of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products to children, to increase their consumption, together with educational activities to reconnect children with agriculture and teach about healthy eating habits.

While it already addresses the new objective to improve the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health, which is set out in the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy for the period after 2020, there is scope for enhancing its contribution to sustainable food production and consumption.

The proposed initiative reviews the EU school scheme as part of the comprehensive approach in the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) for the creation of a favourable food environment that makes it easier to choose healthy and sustainable diets (Action 25), and in Europe's [Beating Cancer plan](#) (Action 3.4: Improving health promotion through access to healthy diets and physical activity).

It also contributes to the [Action plan](#) for the development of organic production (Action 4).

The review will take into account the Council recommendation establishing the [European Child Guarantee](#), according to which Member States should guarantee effective and free access to at least one healthy school meal each school day for all children at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Evaluation

The evaluation study covers the aid scheme for the supply of fruit and vegetables and of milk and milk products in educational establishments set out in Regulation (EU) No [1308/2013](#) and for which the EU budget is fixed in Regulation (EU) No [1370/2013](#).

The scheme is designed to increase the consumption of these products in the short and long term and contribute to the Common Agricultural Policy general objective of enhancing viable food production. In addition, the consumption of fruit, vegetables, milk and selected milk products, in line with national dietary recommendations and food based dietary guidelines, contributes to public health objectives, in particular through efforts to reduce overweight and obesity.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value of the EU school scheme, in line with the Better Regulation guidelines. The evaluation will also seek to identify any unnecessary administrative burden linked to the design or implementation of the EU scheme and the scope for simplification. The evaluation will be based on external, independent analysis, complemented by the synthesis of Member State evaluations (as required under Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) [2017/39](#)) and

Article 9(2) of Regulation (EU) [2017/40](#)).

The evaluation and impact assessment will be carried out back-to-back and cover the period as of the school year 2017/2018 in the 27 Member States, plus the United Kingdom, where the scheme was implemented until 31.12.2020.

Problem the initiative aims to tackle

The proposed initiative will seek to address the following identified problems and future challenges:

- **Coverage:** the EU school scheme currently does not specifically target children who, for their socio-economic status or other factors, are likely to have less healthy and sustainable diets;
- **Scope of eligible products:** in the light of their health benefits, current exceptions to the general prohibition of added sugars, salt and fat may be reconsidered and the possibility of other products, such as plant-based drinks and/or whole grains, explored; more could also be done in respect of their environmental dimension (share of organic products, environmentally-friendly products, conditions for packaging and waste disposal, including food waste reduction);
- **Model for distribution** that is generally, but not exclusively, outside regular school meals and does not always sufficiently ensure visibility and added value;
- **Design, scope, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the educational measures**, for which currently no minimum percentage of the budget is earmarked and no requirements on their content are laid down (e.g. focus on healthy eating habits, agriculture in general or more specifically on sustainable agriculture, including organic farming);
- **Governance** mechanisms that do not always provide for an effective involvement of the relevant public authorities and private stakeholders in the agriculture, education, health and environmental sectors.

It will also seek to increase the use of the available **budget** that on average in the EU does not reach 100%.

The identification of the problems will be further developed, based on the evaluation findings and the consultation activities.

Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

The legal basis is Articles 42, 43(2) and 43(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union on the Common Agricultural Policy. The EU school scheme is under shared management with the Member States.

Evidence shows that all EU Member States, albeit to a varying degree, face a declining or stagnating consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk, falling further short of international or national food-based nutritional recommendations, and a growing incidence of child overweight and obesity and related non-communicable diseases. The problem thus has a Union-wide dimension. Some countries have put in place school programmes at national or regional/local level. However, they are generally limited in scope or scale. Only the common EU framework and its financial involvement made it possible to set up large-scale and more effective programmes.

The legal framework for the school scheme is based on a regulation, directly applicable in all Member States and binding in its entirety, with a view to a homogeneous approach to the Union-wide problem. It provides Member States with a high degree of flexibility in the design and implementation of the scheme, at national or regional level, based on their priorities and needs.

The added value of the review is that it will strengthen the coherence with other EU policies and aim at improving the efficiency/performance of the scheme.

B. Objectives and Policy options

The objectives are to enhance the contribution of the EU school scheme to sustainable food consumption, by promoting the distribution of sustainable products and strengthening educational measures on the importance of healthy nutrition, sustainable food systems and reducing food waste, and to improve the efficiency/performance of the scheme.

In the context of a back-to-back evaluation and impact assessment, a preliminary set of elements to be considered for the review has been identified, which will be combined in a later step into different policy options. These elements can take the form of guidance, technical assistance and funding for networking activities, e.g. to exchange information and good practices, or legislative changes.

The following elements will be developed further and refined in the light of evidence collected and taking into account the outcome of the evaluation and consultation activities:

- **Coverage**

The age brackets or school levels of eligible children (from early childhood education and care to secondary level education) will be considered.

An option might include a review of the target group with the objective of a more inclusive approach, in the light of different patterns of overweight/obesity and access to healthy and sustainable food linked to socio-economic factors.

- **Scope of eligible products**

In line with sustainability objectives, food based dietary guidelines and national and global nutritional recommendations, as set under the Farm to Fork strategy, Beating Cancer Plan and Organic Action plan, options will consider the scope and distribution of eligible products and possibly propose eligibility criteria or conditions, e.g. a minimum share of fresh and organic products.

- **Distribution modalities**

The possibilities to enlarge the model of distribution to exploit synergies with breakfast initiatives and/or distribution of regular school meals will be assessed, taking into account their impact on reaching the targeted beneficiaries.

Distribution modalities could also include elements in relation to food packaging and food waste issues.

- **Educational measures**

The scope and the level of implementation of the education measures will be assessed across the different policy options.

An amendment to existing legislation may be considered to introduce a minimum share of the EU budget that Member States would be requested to devote to the implementation of educational measures.

As regards the content of the educational measures, some priority topics may be considered, such as sustainable agriculture, including organic farming, and healthy eating habits.

- **Cooperation amongst public authorities and stakeholders**

A closer and coherent involvement of the Member States' public authorities in charge of education, health, social and environmental issues, in addition to those in charge of agriculture, in the key stages of the programme design and implementation will be considered.

An amendment to existing legislation could introduce legally binding requirements in that respect.

In order to increase even further the benefits of a concerted approach, an option could introduce requirements for close cooperation amongst not only the Member States' public authorities but also the economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society at national, regional and local levels, in line with their roles and responsibilities as per national rules and procedures.

- **Implementation of the scheme**

Options will consider setting quantified targets for the results to be achieved by Member States for implementation of the scheme and minimum requirements for monitoring, including best practice. *Additionally, introducing performance criteria for the allocation of the budget to the Member States could be considered.

- **Simplification**

Streamlining implementation will be sought in order to simplify to the extent possible the management, control, monitoring and evaluation requirements and procedures, both for the Member States competent authorities and for the beneficiaries of the EU school scheme, and to improve efficiency/performance.

The impact assessment will explore the options and identify a preferred option or a policy mix.

C. Preliminary Assessment of Expected Impacts

Likely economic impacts

Direct economic impacts can be highlighted for

- the target group: participating children and their families will benefit from EU aid;
- the producers and the supply chain (farmers and their associations, distributors, etc.) who will benefit from

<p>this specific demand. The initiative could contribute to their competitiveness, with a possible impact on SMEs depending on the implementation rules.</p> <p>In the short and medium term, supply and educational measures on healthy diets and sustainable food could increase both consumers' demand for, and food business operators' supply of, nutritious and sustainable food. This would contribute to create a virtuous cycle increasing the relative competitiveness of sustainable food products as part of healthy diets.</p> <p>In the long term, facilitating a shift to healthier and sustainable diets would reduce, respectively, the increasing costs stemming from the epidemic in obesity and non-communicable diseases and from the damages on the environment and the related restorations.</p>
<p>Likely social impacts</p> <p>Local sourcing may contribute to employment, added value and inclusive growth in rural areas.</p> <p>In addition to contributing to efforts to halt the rise in overweight and obesity in children and young people (0-18 years), stimulating children and their families to buy healthier products will benefit consumer's health and quality of life.</p> <p>Targeting the socio-economic environment for eligibility or priority in participation in the scheme could have an impact on social inclusion.</p> <p>As regards education, the scheme may increase children's knowledge on food/nutrition/health as well as agriculture/environment i.e. biology and life sciences.</p> <p>Reconnecting children with agriculture and providing higher quality standards could contribute to redevelop the cultural value of food and reduce food waste.</p>
<p>Likely environmental impacts</p> <p>This initiative aims at encouraging a shift to more sustainable consumption patterns: all options should help to reduce the environmental impacts from food and food waste.</p> <p>In line with the EU organic action plan, the initiative will boost demand for organic products and hence increase organic production, hence contributing to production techniques that are environmentally-friendly, promote circularity and animal welfare.</p>
<p>Likely impacts on fundamental rights</p> <p>Any future proposal will be in accordance with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, including the respect of the right of the child. Fundamental rights embedded in the Charter such as consumer and environmental protection should be improved by this initiative.</p> <p>Targeting the scheme to certain groups of children, through an inclusive approach to avoid stigma, would contribute to equal access to healthy and nutritional food.</p>
<p>Likely impacts on simplification and/or administrative burden</p> <p>The evaluation will underpin concrete areas and actions for simplification with regard to planning and implementation of the EU school scheme, both for the public authorities and the beneficiaries (such as for instance in respect of the management, payment and control of aid applications).</p> <p>This aims at offsetting the additional costs that could be linked to the initiative (e.g. new requirements for the distribution of products, including on packaging, rules or procedures for the involvement of authorities and stakeholders).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">D. Evidence base, Data collection and Better Regulation Instruments</p>
<p>Impact assessment</p> <p>An impact assessment will support the preparation of the initiative and inform the Commission's decision.</p>
<p>Evidence base and data collection</p> <p>The impact assessment will be supported by the findings of the evaluation and by a public consultation to be carried out in 2022.</p> <p>The evidence base already existing includes, but is not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member States' strategies for the implementation of the EU school scheme in the period 2017-2023, with the identified needs and objectives, and annual monitoring reports in the Commission website; • Fruit and vegetables consumption statistics – EUROSTAT; • Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Knowledge Gateway – Nutrition-related sections – Joint Research Centre of the European Commission;

- European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative ([COSI](#)) - World Health Organisation (WHO);
- The heavy burden of obesity - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Consultation strategy

The main identified stakeholders are consumers and their organisations (with a focus on children and their parents); educational establishments (early childhood education and care, primary and secondary-level) and associations; the businesses of the fruit and vegetable and the dairy sectors (with a focus on SMEs); and the Member States authorities involved in the agriculture, health/nutrition, education and environmental sectors.

The consultation activities will be composed of backward looking and forward looking questions that address both the performance of the EU school scheme as implemented since 2017 and the design of the new initiative.

The proposed consultations activities are:

- A public consultation for a minimum period of 12 weeks; replies can be made in all official EU languages;
- The organisation of a public conference to discuss the outcome of the public consultation and future policy options;
- A CAP Special Eurobarometer Survey dedicated section on the EU school scheme;
- Discussions with Member States in the relevant Committees as well as with stakeholders in the Civil Dialogue Groups and other networks/platforms (e.g. EU Health Policy Platform).

After the closure of the public consultation, a factual summary report, summarising the public consultation results, will be published on Have your say web portal, along with the contributions to the public consultation.

A synopsis report analysing the results of all consultation activities will subsequently be drafted and be attached as an annex to the impact assessment report.

Will an Implementation plan (IP) be established?

No. The initiative concerns regulations for which the implementation by the Member States does not have a degree of complexity such as to require, or benefit from, specific supportive measures.

The information and communication activities and discussions regularly taking place with the competent authorities in the relevant management committees and with stakeholders in the relevant civil dialogue groups and other platforms are considered sufficient.