

Guidelines for outsourcing collective catering services in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region

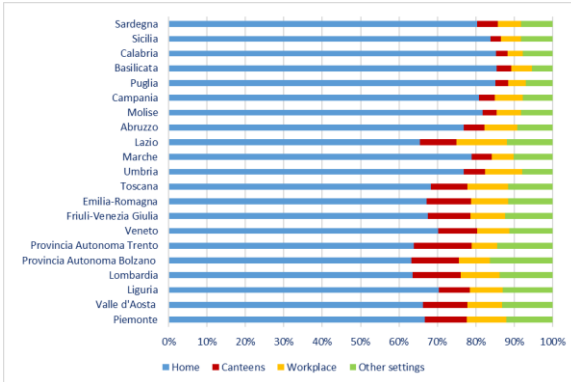
Direzione Centrale Salute, Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia; Azienda Sanitaria Universitaria Giuliano Isontina, Struttura Complessa Igiene Alimenti e Nutrizione*; Azienda Sanitaria Universitaria Friuli Centrale, Struttura Complessa Igiene Alimenti e Nutrizione **; Azienda Sanitaria Friuli Occidentale, Struttura Complessa Igiene Alimenti e Nutrizione***

Manlio Palei, Eleonora Croci*, Giulio Barocco*, Aldo Savoia**, Manuela Mauro**, Fabiola Stuto***

Background

In Europe and in Italy the collective catering sector (CCS) contributes about half of the production of meals consumed outside the home every day. For this reason, plans and programs published by the EU, the WHO Europe Region, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment recommend intergovernmental collaboration and action to facilitate healthier and sustainable food choices in the CCS.

ISTAT (2019): People aged 3 and more years, lunch consumption setting in Italian regions

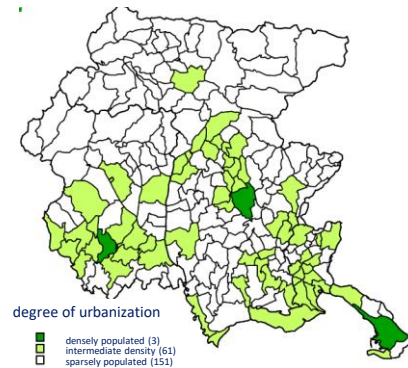


Many stakeholders involved in the collective catering services of schools, hospitals, elderly care homes, and workplaces of the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (ARFVG) have reported some non-compliance with the nutritional, environmental or social standards indicated by public administrations (PA) procurement contracts (PC), which included the recommendations of the WHO, EU, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of the Environment.

Description of the problem

The ARFVG Prevention Plans have set a goal to overcome the critical issues of the regional CCS which serve over 10% of the population (130,000 meals a day), in particular: more than 7 in 10 children eat lunch in a school canteen every day and over 10,000 people live in homes for the elderly.

Eurostat (2019): municipality by degree of urbanization in the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia - NUTS 2 ITH4



Between 2019 and 2021, a multidisciplinary group of experts from health services and from the association of 215 regional municipalities developed the guidelines (GL) for outsourcing CCS. The aim was to support PA in the drafting of PC, evaluation of offers and verification of contractual performance. Reference was made to Dir. 2014/24/EU, EU green public procurement criteria for food, catering services and vending machines, the Public Procurement of Food for Health, technical report on the school setting by the Joint Research Center, the national guide lines for CCS of Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Environment.

The GL for outsourcing of CCS are characterized by the integration between the tender document models and the 8 qualification areas detailed in:

1. restructuring, environments and equipment;
2. supplies;
3. environmental impact and sustainability;
4. production processes;
5. personnel qualification and training;
6. nutritional standards;
7. customer satisfaction;
8. and verification and quality research.

The last sections of the GL report the technical contents for the drafting of tender documents (disciplinary and tender specifications), both from the point of view of the strictly administrative - contractual aspects, and from the organizational, health and nutritional profile of the catering service.

Results

Two regional central purchasing bodies (RCPB) have already used the GL for outsourcing CCS to draft public contracts.

In one case, the RCPB of the Autonomous Local System of the ARFVG has applied to the GL for school collective catering tender of 26 small municipalities, with 3000 meals served daily, with a value of 9.4 millions Euro.

Moreover a second RCPB of the Regional Health Coordination Agency applied the GL for the whole hospital collective catering of the RAFVG, with a value of 317 millions Euro.

For the first time the application of guidelines in PC has introduced homogeneous high level qualification and verification standards for the CCS of the RAFVG.

Lessons

The publication of guidelines for the outsourcing of the collective catering sector at regional level has made it possible for the first time to link and start the activation of collaboration between many regional and local public bodies involved in different topics with the common aim of developing the potential of the regional collective catering sector and together reaching the various developmental objectives.

To achieve these objectives and with the aim of raising the quality of the required performance, but also of providing effective control tools for adequate monitoring, 47 main award criteria have been identified and cataloged in the 8 qualification areas. The view and the effects of 47 qualification criteria has been widely shared with various stakeholders.

In particular some regional webinars were organized to homogeneously train the public staff responsible for checking contracts.

In this context the Agriculture Central Management of the Region has created the georeferenced list of local agro-food producers, in order to promote the spread of proximity supply chains and facilitate subsequent monitoring. In this way it will be easier to support and control local supply chain links at the regional CCS.

To ensure the application of food, nutritional, environmental and social policies in CCS, it is essential to activate networks and synergies between different sectors in order to share knowledge and tools to achieve the common Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goals number 2, 3, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

This project demonstrates the importance of preventative actions with a systemic and forward looking vision, to be ready to face up to the new public health challenges that are emerging.